







ANNALS  
OF THE POETS

## BOOKS BY CHARD POWERS SMITH

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### *Verse*

ALONG THE WIND  
LOST ADDRESS  
HAMILTON—a Poetic Drama  
THE QUEST OF PAN—Beginning a Trilogy  
of Evolution

### *Prose*

PATTERN AND VARIATION IN POETRY

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

# ANNALS OF THE POETS

Their Origins, Backgrounds,  
Private Lives, Habits of  
Composition, Characters,  
and Personal Peculiarities

By  
**CHARL<sup>D</sup> POWERS SMITH**  
Author of  
“Pattern and Variation in Poetry”



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A

TO MY  
FATHER



Among the friends who have supplied me with material for this book, I wish especially to thank Mrs. Evelyn C. Eldredge. I am also grateful to Edward Joseph Fitzgerald, for valuable assistance in editing and indexing.

C. P. S.



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## INTRODUCTION

Curiosity about themselves and their neighbors is undoubtedly the distinguishing feature of the primate family. Apes and men are incorrigibly addicted to prying into their own and one another's affairs; and if this anxiety is not the whole cause of our rise into intellectual supremacy it is at least a necessary condition and its presence the hall-mark of our higher intelligence. It is the sign of healthy mental existence, and wherever we find it in process of atrophy, on whatever pretext of dignity or decorum, we instinctively regret that the individual in question is falling away from his inheritance. The exercise of this prerogative in its normal and everyday expression we have come to stigmatize—timidly, hypocritically, and irreverently enough—under the unworthy word “gossip.” But when we find it excusing itself behind a high pretense of earnestness and sound, then we are willing to accredit it under the name of “literature”—for simple human curiosity has been the motive behind all voluntary writing and reading from the beginning of the world. In its loftiest excursions it takes on the style of “poetry.” In its humblest, most honest, and least delusive form it finds expression in that discursive sort of writing which caused an eighteenth-century wit to remark that his contemporaries—gravely addicted to indulgence in it—were in their “anecdote.” It is the purpose of this volume to shoot both high and low with the arrows of curiosity, to inquire into the nature of that most glorified of anecdotores, the poet, and to prosecute the inquiry in the immediate and shameless simian fashion, the direct anecdotal method, the pursuit, capture, exposure, and enjoyment of each morsel for its own sake.

The founder in English of that branch of anecdote which deals exclusively with writers was—but for the unnamed author of a volume published in 1685—Nichols, in his *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, and not long after him Disraeli *père* raised the practice to noble and clas-

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sical proportions, in his *Curiosities of Literature*, and the subsequent, related volumes. The present volume aims at a place somewhere in the shadow of these works, while narrowing its contents to reports of the doings and feelings of poets who have written in English. The anecdotes are arranged, not biographically or chronologically, but topically, in sections each dealing with some aspect of the poet's experience, so that the reader may observe how different poets have behaved when confronted by similar vital dilemmas, as the exigencies of love or hunger, the presence of danger, discouragement, or other alien annoyance, the unreasonable necessity for economic or manual dexterity. Where anecdotes are missing, the want is often supplied by general statements of the habitual actions of particular poets under certain conditions, as related by standard biographers. Many of the anecdotes being appropriate to two or more of the topics treated, repetition of them has been avoided by a table of cross references at the end of each section. The sources of the work, with few exceptions, have been secondary, the material gathered from cursory, not systematic, reading, and there is no pretense to scholarship or to the presentation of new material. Finally there is no literary criticism as such. In seeking to reach general conclusions about poets with respect to any aspect of personality, it is natural that the writer should attach more weight to the behavior of poets he favors than to the behavior of those he considers unimportant as poets. I have tried to minimize the effect of these personal preferences, but it is inevitable, I suppose, that some critical bias should show itself from time to time.

The reader of this book is not invited to pursue his curiosity beyond the enjoyment of sheer anecdote, in all its disconnected particularity. But in preparing the material the author has been drawn into an ancient, and perhaps interminable, inquiry, the inquiry into the nature, not of poetry, but of the poet, that anomalous by-product of human evolution, perhaps a simian survival, perhaps the precursor of an angelic race, who is so insatiably greedy for the truth behind the appearance of himself and his world that he must needs spend his life, often at great cost, in pursuing it and

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proclaiming from time to time his partial findings with an emotive zeal equalled in no other form of mental activity. What is this elusive creature whom we shall glimpse occasionally peeping from behind the mask of his overt behavior? What consistency, if any, is in him? What god or devil infects his nature that, loving mankind, he usually scorns society and endures its scorn, and will undergo obloquy, privation, disease and death rather than close his eyes to that distant and clouded or immediate and elusive truth which he thinks may yet be seen?

In the succeeding pages we shall pursue this wraith-like being through many and hopelessly miscellaneous circumstances and embodiments. In following him through his external surroundings we shall find ourselves in a labyrinth leading to no goal; if he is born in a castle today, tomorrow he emerges from a hovel; if in one incarnation he enjoys a systematic education, in another he leaps full armed from the private university of his own brain; if he is rich here, there he appears in rags; if sometimes he is sickly or technically insane, again he marches in athletic health and as rationally as any worldling. And pursuing him through the more intimate chambers of personality, our glimpses will be almost as inconsistent: if once we think we have him trapped as a sensualist, presently he leaps free as the veriest ascetic; if we have him for an impractical person, incompetent in the world, disqualified for all exercise but the penning of songs, see him again as the cleverest of artisans, the sanest of organizers, the most meticulous of financiers, the shrewdest of politicians; if we set him down as a man of courage, there he appears in the corner whimpering, the most abysmal of cowards, the most obsequious of sycophants; if we ascribe to him a gentle humanity, he glares back at us a frozen tyrant, indifferent to all suffering but that of his own soul; if we think him a solemn dunce, devoid of humor, listen where the salon splits to his wit and the rafters rock with his laughter; if he parades today as a moral and kindly soul, tomorrow he skulks in the shadow as a schemer and a sneak; or if we come on him caught at last in jail, lo! yonder he stands a pillar of the law.

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If, turning from the factual pursuit, we seek the poet among definitions and generalities, we find ourselves confused before an array of plausible half-truths. At one end of the critical scale we find Milton's rhetoric about "the inspired gift of god rarely bestowed" and Shelley's about "the unacknowledged legislators of the world"; and at the other end we have Mark Van Doren's philological and comfortably evasive dictum that "a poet is a person who writes verses." Between these unhelpful extremes there lies a world of partial revelation. There are Coleridge's several clear expositions, but going rather to the function than the person of the poet; we find, for instance, that he "brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity." And so, numerous other definitions of the poet's business rather than himself, as Newbolt's to the effect that poets "rebuild" the world "for us, so that for an instant we see it in a light that is more than the light of Time." A little closer to our goal is Keats's statement that "the poetical character . . . is not itself . . . it has no self. . . . It is everything and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor. . . ." That is a very keen observation *about* the poet. It states two of his attributes which may well stand the test of all the evidence: the poet's loss of personal identity in his identification with any facet of truth that strikes him, and his gusto. But the essential quality behind these attributes remains to be isolated.

Keats expressly excluded from his statement the "egotistical sublime" poet, specifically Wordsworth—whom Keats, with justification, personally detested. Yet when Keats wrote that letter, the inspired old turn-coat had already indited a definition of the very poet which includes Keats's observation as an incidental corollary and which, for sensitive and poet-like penetration, will hardly be surpassed. The poet, says Wordsworth, "*is a man speaking to men: a man . . . endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to*

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be common among mankind; A MAN PLEASED WITH HIS OWN PASSIONS AND VOLITIONS, AND WHO REJOICES MORE THAN OTHER MEN IN THE SPIRIT OF LIFE THAT IS IN HIM; *delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the Universe.*" (The italics and capitals are mine.) Here, in the capitalized clauses, we come, I think, in full sight of the poet himself, and, in the italicized clauses, of attributes so intimate as to be hardly severable from his essential being. This definition of Wordsworth's I take for my thesis and my text. The anecdotes which follow, while a large share of them will be presented for their own sake and without ulterior purpose, yet will be ordered and commented upon with this definition in mind, to the end that its statement may be vindicated, or disproved, or accepted with amendment. It is perhaps desirable, before pursuing the inquiry, to clarify a little more narrowly Wordsworth's meaning, or what I have accepted as his meaning.

In youth all persons of normally active intelligence go through a phase when they are more or less true poets. The whole being is in a sensitive ferment. As it approaches the revelation of carnal mysteries supposed to be final, so it feels itself on the threshold of initiation into the ultimate spiritual truths of humanity, and of life and the universe generally. It is not a happy period, but a time of tossings between lofty and inexplicable joys and miserably incommunicable griefs, a period of impatience and intolerance, of timidities and arrogances, of unforeseeable and definitively important whims and rages and cruelties. Above all it is a time of spiritual conceit, the age when I, the youth, am more convinced than ever before or after of my own importance. For am I not carrying about in my singing nerves the very and ultimate secret of all things? Am I not indeed?—for who of us who remembers but faintly the awful searchings of those years will gainsay the authenticity, not of the wisdom, but of the all but unutterable, mystical penetration of youth?

. . . close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey dew hath fed  
And drunk the milk of paradise.

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Wordsworth, with the substituted rational pantheism of one who was already forgetting, placed the golden age in infancy, even before birth. If man be likened to a plant, this no doubt is the case. But if man is a mind, a wandering spirit capable of clairvoyant responses to all of the objects in a world pressing in on him, youth is the time when that clairvoyance spreads its petals most sensitively to the rain and the sun; youth is the time when the spirit, if ever, remembers Eden.

The youth, then, bearing within him almost articulately the secret of time and eternity, is *par excellence* “*a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him.*” This pleasure in his own inward workings, this joy in his own being, this attaching of import to himself and the secret he carries, is far other than the pompous vanity of little men in so-called maturity. The latter is a defensive bluff and a vaunt blown out by a dying ego that has already confessed subconsciously its own insufficiency. The former is a certitude and an uncompromising conviction of an inward sufficiency of absolute import not only to him who enshrines it but to the whole world, if they could but know it; for it contains likewise the secret and the sufficiency of the world and is itself the vindication and the anodyne for the sufferings of the world. This is the conceit of youth, and the conceit and the glory of the poet, his peculiar pleasure in “*his own passions and volitions,*” his joy “*in the spirit of life that is in him.*”

The first mark of the poet, then, is delight in and conviction of the transcendent importance of the truth—that is, the “*passions and volitions*”—which he bears within him. But he does not feel this truth to be his exclusive possession, the monopoly of his private ego. The pure poet is no solitary, no unhealthy introvert, no sitter under a tree in contemplation of his private navel. On the contrary, the truth that he finds in himself he also finds, or expects to find, in all other forms that impress his senses. He is equally delighted “*to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the Universe.*” It is the truth,

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the essence of things anywhere that preoccupies him, and he is more important than yonder stranger only because the truth within him is more constantly alive to him, more readily perceived. Give him a confluence of favoring time and circumstances and he will be at the truth of that stranger with fervor and delight in the escape from his too tedious and too unrequited privacy. The essential poet is indeed a sort of universal spirit without self or particular location; a sort of fluid space filling the atomic interstices of all manifestations, and the measure of any poet's failure to escape from his too easy self-awareness into awareness of other forms is the measure of his individual limitation. Since the greatest of poets are in human nature limited by timidities and extraneous passions, and especially since they are chronically prevented by circumstances from flowing in spiritual freedom through external forms, each of them is again and again thrust back into himself as the one repository of truth surely at hand, and we do find him in practice sailing concentrically round himself as the only sure beacon in the gloom. But whether that light of truth be bound within himself or fortuitously seen out yonder in some external form, it is to him the one fact of importance in existence, the one idea in whose contemplation life becomes a passage of joy and death a change of small consequence.

The poet, then, in his theoretical, pure aspect, is nothing other than the spirit of truth informing all things. As such he has, ideally speaking, no function except simply to be. But, as stated above, the boundaries of his own flesh and of social circumstance enclose him more or less bafflingly from his ideal state of diffusion and he becomes, in only a lesser degree than other men, a prisoner within his own personality, involuntarily alone in the midst of a stubborn and unresponsive milieu. His impulse, then, second only to his basic joy in his own private share in the "spirit of life," is to expand from his walls of personality and return into identification with the spirit of life in the forms that his senses discover around him. Later we shall see into what naïve social and sexual gestures this impulse of identification sometimes leads him. But whether, in any particular instance, the im-

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pulse be toward a particular human being, or toward a tree, or an inanimate thing, or mankind or the universe in their generalities, it is fated most of the time to be frustrate, and the poet, like the youth, is bound to be left baffled and bleeding from his too impetuous rush against "the thorns of life." Thereupon, chastened as to his method, but undefeated in desire, he has recourse to a different means of uniting himself to the truth of the thing out there beyond him. He symbolizes or makes an imitation of it by the use of such tools as talent and training may have given him. That talent and training being verbal, he sits down in the heat of frustrated longing and writes a poem. But the poem is not, until the poet is old in defeat, an end in itself. The impulse to identification with the external world is in no wise altered or sublimated in the "creative" gesture. That gesture is still toward an object, the world, and what the poet writes is no celebration of himself, but a message from his own soul to that larger enveloping soul, a report by the wanderer of his important discoveries in strange lands, a sort of letter home. The poem is not complete until it is heard by the world. It is a transcript of mysteries vital to the well-being of God and mankind and which I, this poet, alone can tell them. If the universe is to remain in equipoise they must, I will make them, hear. The necessity for identification, defeated in the direct carnal or spiritual-telepathic method, adopts the method of symbols. It becomes the necessity for communication, the poet becomes "*a man speaking to men.*" And this necessity, this impulse to communication, the poet never entirely foregoes. Frustrate though it be for years, even for life, yet it may not always be frustrate. Once the ineffable truth is inscribed in symbols that others may read and understand, there is always the chance that they will read and understand. If not today, then why not next year? If not in my lifetime, then surely some time later in the immortality of the race. For the book will remain. The desire to communicate the truth of great import which he has seen, or some facet of which he has seen, and which he carries in his soul, become the whole motive of the poet's existence. Those poets and critics who say otherwise, pro-

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fessing that the mere “creation,” the mere inditing of the message, completes the tour of self-expression, are guilty of a consoling rationalization. However wildly I scrawl “with desperate charcoal round my prison walls”—as several poets have done in literal fact—yet there is always the chance that the world, coming to liberate me, will read. Or if my bones rot in my cell, then happily men of the far future will arrive there with picks and lanterns and, led by some spirit of justice in the cosmic order, will chance on my message and will read it and understand it, and my spirit will be released.

Here, then, is the poet, “a man speaking to men,” a person intuitively convinced of the transcendent import of the truth alive in himself, and of the necessity of identifying that truth with the general truth of the world by the method of verbal communication. Out of this conviction and this necessity we shall find, I think, all the peculiarities of the poet arising—different as those peculiarities are as colored and directed by different personalities—all the crotchets and vanities and sensibilities, all the pompous vain-glories and the abysmal self-abasements of the unspoiled spirit instinctively rejecting the communizing “education” of the world, all the naïve and outrageous assumptions, the sensuousness and supposed sensuality, the lofty scorn and the petty calculations, the inexplicable cries of terror, the flights and excursions, the tortured courage, and the consecration that endures. Here is a simple and childlike thing in a world grown complicated around it. It relinquishes any benefit of body or earthly gain, it makes any sacrifice for the protection of its own integrity. And in the interest of that protection it will not hesitate to deceive, to lie, to back-bite, even to kill.

Here is the poet, and here, as I said, is youth. Why then, it may be asked, has youth not given us our greatest poetry? In spiritual fact, I have no doubt it has. In literary fact, it has not, because youth has not learned to write, either as an exercise in manipulating words or, more important, an exercise in manipulating the multifarious gestures of men which, reproduced in art, become, like words, the symbols by means of which truth may be represented. Nevertheless,

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the youth—almost any youth—is inarticulately the pure poet. How much deeper and more passionate conviction may underlie some halting scrawl—“I love Mary,” “God is in the tree,” “The dawn is pretty”—than in all the sonnets and dramas of the sophisticated pen. In youth we still walk with God and our first doubts and dawning of common sense are major tragedies. In youth we still take ourselves, and our souls, seriously, and it is the life-long fidelity of the poet to this initial illusion of his own consequence that distinguishes him from other men, and comprises at once his absurdity and his greatness.

The route by which most men escape or are seduced from their youthful, poetic selves is the highway of the biological and socialized world, the needs of the body and the conventionalized ways that society, out of its long experience, has found appropriate to the safe fulfillment of those needs. In the center of the road is the necessity of a peaceable livelihood, and along with it marriage, and the responsibilities that ensue. With many an unrecorded heartbreak the world closes around the growing youth; slowly necessity encases him with a shell of social maturity, through which the inner light thereafter is seldom seen, though it never utterly fails. The young man learns to say, “All that was well enough for irresponsible youth”—and a devil grins at him as he says it. The youthful poems, the records of early mystical intimation, are forgotten in an old drawer, and his grandchildren discover them.

This young man’s tragedy is the tragedy of the world, the tragedy of the marching hordes of civilization. And along the edges of the parade there strut the burlesquers, the practitioners of travesty for its own sake, not, like the members of the main body, compelled by need. These are the ones in whom the spiritual and self-sufficient conceit of the poet-youth lapses into vanity, the gradual unfueling of the inner self-justification through indulgence, and the demand for its extraneous replenishment through the praise and fancied respect of the world, the need for place and authority, the substitution of outer for inner importance. And there are, further, those men of common sense who conclude rationally

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that all this soul-searching is at best a puerile and egotistical business, and direct their energies with commendable (and usually self-gratulatory) philanthropy to the service of the outward needs of the community.

These are the usual gestures of renunciation by which the poet-youth is transformed into the respectable member of society. But there are other ways that may be, at best, less a renunciation of the inner light than an auxiliary feeding of it with the faculties of the mind. There are those who are persuaded that the quest for and communication of truth may be effected better by rational analysis and synthesis than by the intuitive or imaginative method of the poet alone. If, as they intend, these are able actually to fuse the mind and the imagination in a unified inquiry, thus enlisting together the two loftiest of human prerogatives, they become, perhaps, the acmes and the paragons of mankind, the philosophers and imaginative scientists who lead the race forward. At worst the careful mind rejects and snuffs out the irrational flash of the soul, and they become dusty pedants, laboriously exploring and mapping the country through which their stronger kin will lead the march of civilization.

After the departure of the bread-winners, the vain, the conscientious, the philosophers, scientists, and pedants, there remain but few to complete the emigration from the homeland of the spirit. Among these are the adventurers, perhaps naturally men of action who detoured directly out from boyhood without ever entering the poetic hinterland, perhaps proper poets who blundered from the main track and spend the rest of life fleeing from the hound of heaven that actually offers their salvation; and similar to these, all drunkards, drug addicts, and hecatics who have found an artificial substitute for the too exacting glare of the natural light. And lastly, the exquisites who have simplified life into a thing of art and, relinquishing the direct quest for truth, have retained the æsthetic outline of truth as the pattern of their existence, and so are next kin to the artists.

There remains the band of the spiritually faithful, the poets, the other artists, the mystics and the true prophets. The distinctions between these are delicate, relative and not

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very important, for they all grade into one another. Perhaps the only real distinctions between them are in terms of talent, a natural facility in the manipulation of words rather than paint, of clay rather than sound. They have in common the need for the intuitive discovery of and identification of themselves with the absolute truth of the world; and starting with this impulse, their several quests pursue only slightly divergent courses. The poet may be taken as the central type, and the others distinguished from him in so far as distinction is possible. The qualities of the poet may be taken as these:

The quest for absolute truth by intuitive inquiry.

An admixture of systematic inquiry, the impulse to reduce the discovered truth to verbal statement—the poet often incorporates a little of the quality of the philosopher.

The practice of representing truth by the combination of symbols (in the poet's case, words, their sounds and meanings) into æsthetic form, which is the shadow of truth.

The need of communication to an audience.

No single poet combines these qualities equally, some varying in the direction of the mystic, some in that of the plastic artist, some in that of the musician.

The pure mystic has typically only the first of the four qualities. He comes at God, or truth, directly, seeking no symbols except those of nature and human nature in which to embody his perceptions. He is the poet who has never been forced to substitute representation, the making of imitations, for direct identification with the object. He may or may not have the qualities of the philosopher. He scorns symbols and the secondary recourse of beauty, or æsthetic form. And he scorns communication.

The prophet adds the need of communication to the qualities of the mystic.

The painter and sculptor, as part of their respective arts, eschew the inquiry of the philosopher. They are preoccupied

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first of all with the identification of themselves with the object by representing it in symbols—paint or clay—combined into æsthetic form. More often than other artists they are indifferent to communication. The painter also may take a special joy in the sensuous excitement of his medium for its own sake, color.

The musician also delights in his medium sensuously. Like other artists he molds it into form, and more than any of the rest he demands communication.

And beyond these slight differences all of them have the essential quality which we have already noticed as the mark of the poet, the consciousness of possessing the capacity for identification with absolute truth, and of being, therefore, important and special persons.

Finally, some distinction might be attempted between the poet and the other “creative” writers, the dramatists, the essayists, the fiction-writers. But any such distinction, where it can be drawn, is only of degree, and in many individual cases it probably does not exist at all. In general the poet may have a slightly more sensitive talent for handling the phonetic and semantic nuances of words. Perhaps he has typically a little more of the quality of the mystic, a little more intensity in the direct attack on truth, which intensity compels expression in a more insistent rhythm. Perhaps he is a little more “pleased with his own passions and volitions, and rejoices” a little more “in the spirit of life that is in him.” But practically the upshot of such distinctions is only to reveal their futility. Whatever is true of poets is almost always true of other writers, as it is usually true of other artists generally. With this recognition of the psychic community of all artists, mystics and prophets, and acknowledging that most of our conclusions will apply equally to all of them, I shall attend henceforth exclusively to the doings and feelings of the poet.

The purport of what has been said is to the effect that the poet is a sort of superannuated youth, in psychic terms an arrested adolescent. Whether this be a slight on him or a compliment must depend on the point of view of the individual reader. If the aim of life be self-aggrandizement

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in wealth and authority; or if, more nobly, it be the enjoyment of physical comfort and pleasurable diversion; or if, more nobly still, it be the attainment of spiritual calm through the moderation of desires; or, finally, the elevation of the community to an equable plane of comfort and moderated pleasure through devoted and serviceable government; if, generally, the aim of life be the social good as interpreted in physical terms, then the poet is an immature and annoying fellow who, where he is worthy of notice at all, is a menace that may well be eliminated, a crazy individualist whose views, practically applied, would spell only anarchy. But if, on the other hand, there be a lurking suspicion that life has other than material value, if it be supposed that the deepest desires of men are of a uniform, unacquisitive, non-competitive and naturally sympathetic quality, and that if they were allowed by common consent to express themselves in action they would at once transcend the uglier desires so that repression, individually and socially, would be no longer necessary and government could devote itself to administering an unrecalcitrant community: if such a state of things be considered the aim and the possibility of human life, then the poet is indeed a prophet and an "unacknowledged legislator of the world." The state of youthful idealism which he refuses to renounce becomes the apex and crest of the advancing wave of his generation, whence the descent of the bulk into social maturity is a degeneration and an apostasy. Social maturity in materialistic terms becomes social and individual senility, and life reaches its proper end with the shattering of the as yet unrealizable dreams of youth.

But the poet is the man who does not tolerate the shattering of his dreams. He continues "pleased with his own passions and volitions"—that is, "the spirit of life," or truth, "that is in him"—and "delighting to contemplate similar passions and volitions" in other men. And retaining this freshness of outlook, while time furnishes it with the images and lessons of experience, he emerges at length into a human maturity and a wisdom beside which the worldly sophistication of others is no more than a knowledge of the rules of

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some crass and forgotten game. For the doors of experience for the poet do not open toward any tangible victory or toward any reconciliation of himself with the surfaces of society, they open instead into a nearer understanding of men as individuals and a quicker sympathy with the ramifications of those deepest passions and volitions which society would overwhelm. It is because of this sympathy which radiates from him that the poet is welcome to the few with the courage to remember, and is anathema to the many who have determined and studied to forget. He is untutored in the formulæ of lethe, but he is adept in the mysteries of remembering natural truth beneath the hurly-burly of maturity. In proportion as he resists the seductions of his own special society, the vanities and discouragements of his own literary success or failure, he is the most mature of mankind, having "more enthusiasm and tenderness, . . . a greater knowledge of human nature, . . . a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among" men. And he knows this. He knows, not rationally but instinctively, the importance of the truth he carries and to which he responds in others. Which accounts for his remarkable fidelity to his calling, his unique inner sufficiency, and his characteristic conceit.



*PART I*

ORIGINS



## *ADVENT*

Gladly as the poets would be persuaded otherwise, the circumstances of their births seem to have been as miscellaneous and non-descript as those of other men. Unlike the reincarnations of the Thibetan Buddha, no recognizable portent precedes or accompanies the periodic returns of the poet into the world. With the possible exception of the parents involved, or of the poet himself, no prophet prepares his way in the wilderness and no priest receives the whispered intimation of glad tidings. Only the ordinary stars are seen. No shepherds draw near to do homage. No kings come bearing gifts, but only cousins and aunts. I know one contemporary poet who, in want of extraneous wonders, asserts, with some show of evidence, that he himself remembers the day of his birth. But while he boasts of the prodigy freely among his intimates, he is so frail in false modesty or apprehensive of ridicule that he has asked me to withhold his name. However, he is a poet known at least by name to the reader, and from his recollection of a certain face and certain lace and of a vague sense of a certain peculiarly decorated room in which he was never thereafter found during infancy, I am half convinced that in this case the perceptive mind of genius was already active within a few hours after its advent from the great and comfortable unknown.

Milton first saw the light appropriately under The Sign of the Spread Eagle at his father's scrivener's shop in Cheap-side.

Sir John Van Brugh, destined for a distinguished career as architect and poet, was born in the Bastille.

The infant Gray was addicted to convulsions, and on one occasion his mother—who bore twelve children, of whom Thomas alone reached maturity—opened a vein with her scissors to relieve the pressure on the baby's brain.

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Burns, though claiming no recollection of the matter, yet attached ominous consequences to the circumstance of his birth on that wild January night when the gale caved in the roof of the clay hut his father had built, and the mother fled with her child through the storm to a neighbor's cottage for shelter; later he said that on that night the wind "blew handsel in" of all his tempestuous career.

Byron was born with a caul, which was a well-known talisman against drowning. The charm seems to have worked well enough for the benefit of the natatorial poet himself but, his nurse having sold the rarity to one Captain Hanson, the gods seem to have been angered at this mercenary meddling with fate, for the unfortunate captain was drowned two years later.

Shelley was born on August 4, 1792, the day when the French National Assembly decreed the confiscation of all religious houses.

Bryant was born in a log house at Cummington, Massachusetts.

Keats was a seven months' baby.

Poe was born in Boston during one of the "spasmodic peregrinations" of his actor parents.

The import of Hardy's birth was so little appreciated that he was thrown aside for dead. Presently he must have been so in fact, had not the nurse, glancing up from attending the mother, cried out suddenly, "Dead! Stop a minute! He's alive enough, sure!"

Ben Jonson, Cowley, Swift and Chatterton were posthumous children.

Fairfax, Edmund Smith and Savage were of noble parentage and illegitimate. The intrigues, crimes and miscellaneous agonies which ensued upon the birth of the last involved many of the nobility and most of the English writers of the early eighteenth century, and generally had their lurid vogue in the attention of the realm.

## INHERITANCE

### *INHERITANCE*

The appropriate inheritance or “breeding” of the poet is a matter which invites inquiry. Is this deliver into truth best nurtured among the economic lower classes, where his eyes, his ears, his nose and his practical training will bear closest on fundamental reality? Is he best stimulated among the lower middle classes where he may enjoy the advantages of education and enlightened association while the rungs of the ladder above him yet invite him to individual endeavor? Or among the upper middle classes where to these conditions may be added a modicum of social complacence? Or is this delicate bud most likely to flower in the maximal economic and social security among the delicate amenities of the upper classes? Without going deeply into the quality of particular families, it may be possible to approach a conclusion through a classification of the paternal social statuses of the poets.

In arranging the poets according to the economic-social station of their fathers, I have come on a few exceptional cases where a poet was begotten in one stratum of society and raised in another; notably Ben Jonson, Savage, Phillis Wheatley and Poe. In these cases I have leaned toward environment and away from inheritance, identifying the child with the foster-parent rather than with the true father, on the theory that early environment is more definitive than so-called “blood.” Those minded otherwise upon this difficult question may alter my classifications to suit their convictions.

We find, then, poets born into the four classes of society as follows:

*Of lower-class fathers.*

Of shoemakers, 1—Marlowe.

Of gardeners, 2—Corbet, J. Cunningham (father at first a gardener and subsequently steward to the landlord of Burns’s father).

Of peasants, 4—Cædmon, Burns, Clare (father a cripple and a pauper), Hogg (father a shepherd).

Of farmers, 6—Langland (father a franklin), Butler, Beat-

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tie (father a small farmer and shopkeeper), Bloomfield (father was a tailor but he died early and the poet was raised by his uncle, a farmer), Woodworth, Whittier.

Of carpenters, 1—Whitman (father farming at the time of his birth but shortly moved into Brooklyn and set up as a carpenter).

Of weavers, 1—David Gray.

Of servants, 1—Lamb.

Of brick-layers, 1—Ben Jonson (father was in fact upper middle-class, the grandfather having been a Scotch nobleman who moved to England, bought a great house and suffered many vicissitudes as a Protestant, including imprisonment and confiscation of his estates by Queen Mary, release after four years, and subsequent ordination in the Church of England. One month after his death Ben was born and shortly thereafter his mother, herself the daughter of a tailor, married Thomas Fowler, a brick-layer).

Of church chanters, 1—Chatterton (family had been sextons for a century and a half).

Of barbers, 1—Falconer.

Of miscellaneous lower-class fathers, 4—Spenser, Taylor, Broome, Nicoll.

Total born to lower-class fathers—23.

### *Of lower middle-class fathers.*

Of tailors, 1—Meredith (mother of good Irish family).

Of bakers, 2—Whitehead, Savage (raised as the child of "a baker's wife named Porlock," though actually the illegitimate son of Earl Rivers and the Countess of Macclesfield).

Of butchers, 1—Akenside.

Of country postmasters, 1—Frances Brown.

Of builders, 2—Hardy, George Eliot (father also an estate agent).

Of iron-founders, 1—Ebenezer Elliott.

Of turkey merchants, 1—James Hammond.

Of managers of mines, 1—Ramsay.

Of hatters, 1—Collins.

Of wine coopers, 1—Cunningham.

Of vintners, 2—Chaucer, Dobell.

Of grocers, 2—Prior (though raised by his uncle, a vintner), Moore.

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Of livery-stable-keepers, 1—Keats.

Of hosiers, 1—Blake.

Of country salt collectors, 1—Crabbe (father had also been a country school-teacher).

Of glovers, 1—Shakespeare (father also a dealer in barley, timber, wool, and miscellaneous agricultural products. The mother, Mary Arden, was upper-class, Warwickshire county gentry).

Of stationers, 1—Cowley.

Of scriveners, 2—Milton (father a man of cultivation who composed music and had been disinherited by his father for religious reasons), Thomas Gray (father made and lost a fortune during his life).

Of linen drapers, 1—Southey.

Of sugar bakers, 1—Vanbrugh (father, however, rose to be esquire and comptroller of the Treasury chamber, and to marry well).

Of bank accountants, 1—Fergusson.

Of innkeepers, 3—Cartwright, Davenant (persistent rumor, however, that Davenant was the illegitimate son of Shakespeare, who was a frequent lodger at the legal father's hostelry, the Crown Tavern, Oxford—a rumor somewhat strengthened by the fact that Davenant was always passionately devoted to the memory of Shakespeare and remained his principal advocate during his period of relative neglect, the Restoration), Mallet (father probably was an innkeeper in Perthshire, though there is some evidence that he was one of the three men "on the great estates of Perthshire who rode on saddles," that being a high mark of quality. In any case he was one of the infamous MacGregor clan who were required to relinquish their name for having participated in the rebellion of 1715. He took the name of Mallock, subsequently anglicized by his snobbish son to Mallet).

Of sea captains, 1—Very.

Of river-boat captains, 1—Moody.

Of book sellers, 3—Samuel Johnson, Hood, Henley.

Of music masters, 1—Daniel.

Of planters, 1—Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Of miscellaneous merchants, 8—Donne (father probably a rich iron-monger, though mother upper-class, being kin to many of the nobility. Both parents were Catholic and many of the mother's relatives were banished and their property

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confiscated during the Reformation), E. Smith (illegitimate son of an eminent merchant, a Mr. Neale, by a daughter of the famous Baron Lechmere—raised after his father's death by kin named Smith), Pope, M. Green, Campbell (though family had been landed gentry), Felicia Hemans, Poe (son of a cheap actor but raised by John Allan, a wealthy merchant of Richmond), Clough.

Total born to lower middle-class fathers, 44.

### *Of upper middle-class fathers.\**

Of civil engineers, 1—Stevenson.

Of bankers, 2—Rogers, Browning.

Of governors of provinces, 1—Aphra Behn (father governor of Surinam).

Of military officers, 1—Gordon.

Of doctors, 4—Beddoes, Symonds (family distinguished in medicine for five generations), P. B. Marston (father also a dramatist), Thompson.

Of lawyers, 6—Blackmore (himself subsequently knighted), Swift, Dyer, Scott (himself subsequently made baronet), Wordsworth, Longfellow, Emily Dickinson.

Of educators, 5—Watts, Lloyd, Hunt, Arnold (father the famous Doctor Arnold of Rugby), Rossetti (father also a poet, one time librettist to the San Carlo Opera, member of the Department of Instruction in Naples, and eventually professor of Italian in King's College, London).

Of divines, 25—J. Fletcher, Cleveland, Crashaw, Marvell (family associated by legend with Elizabethan manor house), Sprat, Otway, Lee, Pomfret, Addison, Young, Tickell, Blair, Thomson, West, Goldsmith (father a poor curate), Churchill, Joanna Baillie, Montgomery (father a Moravian missionary), Coleridge, Keble, Tennyson (the grandfather had pretensions to Plantagenet descent), Kingsley, Emily Brontë (father originally an Irish peasant who worked himself up to ordination), Myers, S. Phillips.

Total born of upper middle-class fathers, 45.

### *Of upper-class fathers.*

Of members of the gentry, 48—Gower, Lyndsay, Tusser, Raleigh (himself knighted), Lodge, Chapman, Breton, Har-

\* Some of the fathers mentioned hereunder though practising professions may have been properly members of the gentry, as in the case of Landor's father.

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rington (himself knighted), Drayton, Massinger, Ford, Wither, Carew, King, Randolph, Waller (mother a sister of Hampden), Dryden, Habington (uncle executed in Habington's plot, but mother wrote letter that thwarted the gunpowder plot), Anne Bradstreet, Walsh, Wycherly, Lady Winchelsea, Congreve, Garth, Rowe, Somerville ("He writes very well for a gentleman"), Parnell, Fenton, Gay, Shenstone, Smollett, Smart, Cowper (mother a Donne, the family of the poet—father, chaplain to George II), Trumbull, Freneau, Sotheby, Landor, Dana, Byron (came to his title remotely), Shelley (grandfather made a baronet when Shelley was fourteen), Emerson, Holmes, Hake, Chivers, Milnes (himself raised to peerage), Lowell, Swinburne (father an admiral, immediate forebears sturdy, unintellectual, hunting, county people; remote ancestors hard-fighting border nobility in whose supposed "chivalry and violence" Swinburne took pride), Lanier.

Of members of the nobility, 25—Douglas, Wyatt, Surrey, Sackville (by inheritance accumulatively Lord Buckhurst, Earl of Middlesex, and Earl of Dorset), Gascoigne, Sidney (father when a young man recorded as "the only odd man and paragon of the court"), Fairfax (illegitimate son of Sir Thomas Fairfax but raised as a nobleman), Wotton, Drummond, Beaumont, Suckling, Denham, Lovelace, Duchess of Newcastle, Cotton, Roscommon, Sedley, Rochester, Shefield, Granville, Lyttleton, Bulwer-Lytton, Doyle (second baronet in a family of military people), De Vere, De Tabley.

Of royalty, 1—James I of Scotland.

Total born of upper-class fathers, 74.

Tabulating these totals and reducing them to approximate percentages we have the following results:

NUMBER OF POETS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL	
	NUMBER OF POETS	
Upper class . . . . .	74	40 per cent
Upper middle class . . . . .	45	24 per cent
Lower middle class . . . . .	44	24 per cent
Lower class . . . . .	23	12 per cent
	186	100 per cent

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From these data the inference would seem to follow that the place to be born a poet is among ease and privilege. Literary accomplishment would seem to spring from the political responsibility of the aristocratic code. Sir Philip Sidney, the pure gentleman of English chivalry, becomes also the type poet. The moral quality of the dying leader who surrenders the cup of water to his wounded henchman is identified with the spiritual quality that perceives and names the truth of things.

But in common sense we know that this elegant inference is unsound. Several of the great poets have been characterized by a high moral impulse, but several have not. And their morality, when it existed, followed in action, not the aristocratic code or any other social pattern, but unique and private instincts of their own which, more often than not, expressed itself in overt violation of the accepted ways of society. The ideal poet is not the perfect poet-gentleman, and, picturesque as is the figure of Sidney, actually he does not belong in the grand literary list. There is some flaw in our data that ascribe so impressive a plurality to the poets of the upper class.

The flaw is that our bulky list accredits most of the poets who have crept into the largest anthologies, making no distinction between the great and the lesser figures. It is apparent that our list of seventy-four upper-class poets is swelled disproportionately by the minor "mob of gentlemen who rhymed with ease" and the even less significant mob of rhyming parsons, and that as you descend the social scale the proportion of truly great among the poets of each class increases progressively. To select the list of the truly great is a critical exercise which has no place in this book. But, avoiding as far as possible my personal preferences, I suggest twenty as showing reasonably sure signs of indefinite duration (see opposite page), along with the number and percentage each social class has contributed to this immortal gallery.

A glance at this smaller list might lead to the comfortable inference that greatness has nothing to do with early social and economic environment, that, striking anywhere like lightning, its flames will neither be extinguished by hardship nor

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fed by ease. Leisure no doubt is favorable to the production of graceful trifles which literature could easily spare, but true greatness will arise triumphant over all obstacles and it

		NO.	PERCENTAGE
Upper class ..	Dryden, Byron, Shelley, Emerson	4	20%
Upper middle class	Wordsworth, Coleridge, Tennyson, Browning, Francis Thompson	5	25%
Lower middle class ..	Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Pope, Gray, Keats	7	35%
Lower class	Spenser, Marlowe, Burns, Whitman	4	20%
		20	100%

is only the lesser and dispensable talents that will be either chained or liberated by circumstance.

Comforting as this conclusion may be, it is contrary to fact. Our data, to be indicative, must still take into consideration the vast disparity in numbers between the four social classes. In any vertical section of the Anglo-Saxon world whose population is one hundred, at least eighty of these will belong to the lower classes, perhaps fifteen to the lower middle, four to the upper middle, and one to the aristocracy. Tabulating these figures with the foregoing list of the total number of poets and of the twenty greatest, we have the following:

	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NUMBER OF POETS	PERCENTAGE OF GREAT POETS
Upper class .. . . . .	1%	40%	20%
Upper middle class. . . . .	4%	24%	25%
Lower middle class. . . . .	15%	24%	35%
[Combined upper, upper middle, and lower middle classes] . . .	[20%]	[88%]	[80%]
Lower class. . . . .	80%	12%	20%
	100%	100%	100%

The significant conclusion here, and the one sure and important conclusion to be drawn from all the data presented,

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is indicated in the figures representing the lower class, and the bracketed figures above them representing the three higher classes combined. Poetry is not encouraged in the peasant's cot or in the laborer's hovel. The lower class, with 80 per cent of the population, has produced only 12 per cent of all the poets, and only 20 per cent of the great poets. Interpret the figures in any way you choose. Point out, as I have already done, that the showing of the lower class is better in the great poets than in the general list. Change my selected list to suit your taste: subtract Byron or Dryden or Gray, or add Sidney, Chapman, Drayton, Drummond, Herbert, Blake or Swinburne; subtract Emerson, Tennyson or Thompson, or add Marvell, Crashaw, Thomson, Young, Coleridge, Rossetti or Arnold; subtract Pope or Donne, or add Whittier, Poe or Ben Jonson. Point out that my percentages of population are only crudely approximate. In order to reduce the qualified percentage of the lower class in the whole population, introduce the dubious, aristocratic argument that this lower class includes racially inferior strains incapable of rising to intellectual distinction. Alter the figures in any plausible way you choose. Yet the evidence will remain conclusive, that an insignificant minority of the population, favored by at least moderate economic security, has produced the overwhelming majority of the poets, and conversely that the overwhelming majority of the population, afflicted by poverty, has contributed but few. It is certain that early surroundings of hardship blunt the imagination and that Gray was right about those mute inglorious Miltos. The poet is better nurtured in an early environment of at least moderate wealth and some freedom to choose his career, than in the narrow prospect of a life of unvaried manual toil. It may be that a period of poverty and struggle in his own young manhood is valuable to the poet as broadening his human understanding. But in his earliest years he were better free of surroundings every one of which is calculated to discourage his secret conviction that he is in spirit, and is qualified to become in fact, a member of the company of the great.

The conclusion that economic security is important to the

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poet in childhood seems to be substantiated by the figures respecting the three higher classes as between themselves. The upper class, where independence is most securely entrenched, has contributed poets and great poets out of proportion to its inferiority of population. And the upper middle class has done better than its proportion of the population would require in relation to the lower middle class, whose economic security is most precarious. Yet in these cases the disparities are not so overwhelming as to render futile other considerations which may alter the implications of the bare statistics. And other considerations are presented by the fact that our seven poets bred in the lower middle class are, with the exception of Gray, more secure in their immortality than the poets bred in any other situation, more secure because these poets have produced more work that is certain to live, work of greater sweep and greater originality, in short, more work of the finest quality. There arises the possibility that there is in the atmosphere of the lower middle class some element specially favorable to the growth of the poet, and compensatory for relative poverty.

The stimulating element is, I think, social insecurity, in other words the absence either of the comforting sense of position or of an established way of life almost as exacting and mortifying in its demands as economic necessity. Contrary to the usual assumption, the background of trade is peculiarly suited to foster the young poet, that sensitive youth of ours who is never going to forget the importance of himself as carrying in his nerves the secret of life that clamors to be born and named. If only, as distinguished from the lower-class boy, he can escape from the certain prospect of uncongenial toil, the world stirs his ambition more than it would in any other station. If he is uncomfortable in the commonness of his own surroundings, it will be possible to rise above them. If the heights of greatness are not yet attained they are now for the first time in his sight and attainable, and he is as yet subject to no disillusion as to their grandeur. Furthermore, he is often ideally situated for self-determination. At best he is neither frustrated by hardship nor seduced by luxury or artificial self-importance.

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He has escaped from the routine and the conventionalized resignation of mind below him; he is not yet buttressed around by the codes of conventional thought and action of the world above. For once in the long social journey he is alone in a wide and unknown country. He is man at the beginning of things, under no constraint to see and name them otherwise than naïvely in his own peculiar fashion. Everything invites his curiosity. And amidst the wonders of the dawning world here he stands, this self, this I, peculiarly expanding to diffuse itself through them all. Beyond all other youth this lad of the lower middle class is special, whose father will not perforce put him out to labor before he has well mastered his R's, nor ever say, "Son, it is your duty and your privilege to do so and so for the honor of the family." If he helps with the chores he knows these ways are not for him. When he kills a calf he does it with a flourish and "makes a speech"—he will be Shakespeare. Or he contemplates for years and determines to write something that "they should not willingly let . . . die"—he will be Milton. He will probably become a queer one and a problem to his sound relations. But he has the best chance in the world of becoming a great poet.

In the matter of inheritance then, or early training or "breeding," one conclusion is certain—that the atmosphere of hardship tends to nip the poet in childhood; and a second conclusion, though unprovable, is tenable—that the sense of social security is undesirable, lest the young poet turn aside into the slough of complacence and convention. Out of all the anecdotes that follow we shall be able to draw few conclusions with as much assurance as even the second of these.

With few exceptions, the early circumstances of the poets, economic and social, have been appropriate to their paternal stations. In the lower class we find Hogg, tending the cows as a tiny boy, and while still young given the custody of a flock of sheep; Clare returning home from the day's and often the evening's toil as ploughboy to the pauper's cottage of his father; and the boy Woodworth in the midst of his semi-literate family, refreshing himself at the later

famous bucket. Among the poets of lower-class origins it is almost the rule that some unusual condition obtains, or chance descends, to liberate them from the prospect of manual toil. Spenser's family was connected with the wealthy Spensers of Lancashire, though the degree of cousinship is not known. At any rate he was subject to patronage as early as the period of his education. Ben Jonson, already in service with his father as a brick-layer, was liberated by the discovery of his precocity by the famous William Camden who thereupon inducted him into the Westminster School of which he was master. Burns was of the peasantry, but a unique, educated Scotch peasantry in which intellectual ambition was the rule. Bruce, who was the son of a poor weaver and tended cattle as a child, was of this same Scotch peasantry, and, when the boy was fifteen, the father inherited the considerable sum of £11, 2s, 2d, with which he sent him to the university. Lamb's father was servant and friend to a gentleman of the Temple and so presumably had influential connections. Whitman, son of a poor carpenter, found spiritual compensation and elevation in the knowledge of patriotic forebears: a maternal ancestor who had died in an English prison, an uncle who had fallen in the battle of Brooklyn, and another uncle who had camped near Fort Greene, in Brooklyn, in the War of 1812.

The economic circumstances of the lower middle class cover a wide range. At the top we find John Donne, senior, wealthy iron-monger married to a wife with aristocratic connections, John, junior, and a sister being the only children who survived to inherit a considerable fortune; Tom Moore, in the big house of his father, a rich grocer of Dublin; Poe, raised in comfort in the family of John Allan, wealthy merchant of Richmond; and Elizabeth Barrett, at once pampered and suffocated in the home of her slave-owner father who, even after he was "ruined" by emancipation, still lived in a big house with the windows heavily curtained. More humble economically was the boyhood of Milton, living over the scrivener's shop—though alleviated by his father's learning and ambition for his son; still more humble that of Prior serving wine to the nobility in his uncle's wine-shop; that of

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Akenside serving the customers of his father, the butcher; and among the lowest of all middle-class prospects were those of the son of John Shakespeare, poor glover and petty merchant in the cramped quarters of the "old house" at Stratford, dignified by marriage to an Arden of Warwick. Poverty is not rare in the lower middle-class, but almost always there is some circumstance tending to direct the eyes of young talent elsewhere than toward a life of drudgery—the recollection of wealth lost, an ambitious parent, relatives of higher station tending to prick his pride, or simply the ambition characteristic of any one who is "on the make."

The economic circumstances of the upper middle class are usually more moderate and better entrenched than those of the lower middle class, ranging neither so high into affluence nor so low into poverty. Typical was the situation of the young Browning in the comfortable and cultivated home of the employee of the Bank of England, independent in his own right, and preoccupied only with learning and curious amenities; and that of Emily Dickinson in the solid *ménage* of the leading lawyer of Amherst; that of the son of Doctor Thompson, the prosperous and philanthropic physician of Manchester; that of Wordsworth in the spacious brick mansion at Cockermouth, of Coleridge in the vicarage at Ottery St. Mary, of Tennyson in the rectory at Somersby where the father had built with his own hands the Gothic refectory with its vaulted ceiling and its stained-glass windows, and where the whole family were encouraged in fanciful and literary pursuits. Bryant's boyhood was one of poverty, but a healthy rural poverty in the New England intellectual tradition. The childhood homes of Thomson and Goldsmith, both sons of prelates, were financially cramped. But even in such cases the consciousness of a station in which economic security was traditional, and usually the presence of wealthy kin as well, gave the boys some sense of security.

Typical of upper-class circumstances were those of Shelley at Field Place with the prospect of nothing but wealth, and of Swinburne in the big house by the sea into whose breakers his father, the admiral, used to pitch the boy head first. More exceptional was the situation of Byron whose eccentric

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mother was reduced by his father's profligacy to an income of £130, or that of Emerson, whose family was cast by his father's death, when Ralph was eight, from semi-feudal conditions in the Manse at Concord into shivering poverty in Boston.

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The only credible general statement regarding the childhood of poets is the vague one that they usually take themselves more seriously than other children do. This self-importance may at times be encouraged or even caused by some external event or circumstance which sets them apart, or by some internal quality of their own which tends to mark them as special among their fellows, as a native pugnacity or a shy and introverted loneliness. Or it may be that the causation runs in the opposite sense, and it is the self-preoccupation of the poet which emphasizes or compels his external and internal peculiarities. The question will arise again in the sections on "Health" and "Miscellaneous Aberrations"; but outside of clearly pathological states which have set some of the poets apart from the beginning, I doubt if any categorical answer is possible.

James I of Scotland suffered as happy a mischance as ever directed an active young mind to poetry. When he was eleven years old (1405), in order to save him from his unscrupulous uncle, the Duke of Albany, he was dispatched by ship to the court of Charles VI of France. The ship, however, was seized by the agents of Henry IV of England and the prince detained as a compulsory guest for eighteen years in Windsor Tower. Here, carefully educated in body and in mind by Henry's direction, he composed his poetry, sitting at a window in the Tower overlooking a quiet garden that was his world and where every minute event was fraught with import. Released at thirty, he became an able and enlightened ruler. He was assassinated in 1437. His royal policies and

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struggles are today of small consequence. But the world retains the record of his interlude of isolation.

Surrey in his tenth year (1526) was given the haughty position of cup-bearer to Henry VIII.

Ben Jonson was a pugnacious youngster who wore an adult coat with tails dragging on the ground, and when the other boys baited him he chased them, shouting Latin imprecations.

John Wesley, the hymnist, was nominated a special person by divine fiat. When a baby he was miraculously saved from his father's burning house, the latter having declined the dangerous office of rescuing him. Just after his escape the roof fell in. This incident contributed strongly to his later evangelism, giving him the conviction that he had been saved by God for a special mission, and he adopted a device found on some of the contemporary prints of him, "viz., a house in flames, with this motto from the prophet, 'Is he not a brand plucked from the burning?'"

Little Goldsmith was a naughty, dull and unlovely child. He had a pug nose, bandy legs, fists too delicate to fight, a large head, and he was pock-marked. He was addicted to stealing apples and rifling birds' nests, and at school he habitually wore the dunce cap. Once he drew on the wall by the school a supposed likeness of Paddy Byrne, the master, and had in return a sound feruling.

In contrast to the fighting young poets like Ben Jonson we have the wretched little introverts of whom Cowper was probably the most cringing. In school he was a coward and badly bullied, never looking at his persecutor above the knees. Having trouble with his eyes, he fortunately was taken from school and lived for two years with an oculist.

Blake resented flogging so fiercely that he was never sent to school. Once when he was sketching in the Abbey and the Westminster School boys of his own age baited him, one of them climbing up to the pinnacle beside him, Blake pitched the offender to the ground and reported the matter to the Dean.

When Wordsworth was eight or nine years old he went fishing with a neighbor to the sources of the Dudden, climbing so far into the mountains that he had to be carried home

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on his friend's back in the rain. On another occasion he solemnly led another boy, the servant of an itinerant juror, up a rocky peninsula in Windemere to show him the view.

Of all introverted children Coleridge was, at the outset, as he remained through life, the most picturesque, the most helpless, and the most loveable. A slothful, affectionate, and lonely child, the youngest of nine, he was ignored by his practical mother, spoiled by his impractical father, generally flattered and made vain by women for his precocity in spelling and reading, despising and despised by the boys of his own age for his inability to play at anything, alternately beaten and indulged by his brother Frank who was intrigued by his quaint ways, spending all of his time either reading tales of colorful adventure or acting them over in his imagination. In his eighth year he ran away from the torments of his family to a little hill by the Otter River. Here, "fortified by obstinacy, a prayer-book, and the glowing satisfaction of thinking how miserable his mother must be, he stayed until . . . dark and . . . fell asleep." It was a cold, stormy, autumn night and the poet, dreaming that he was pulling the blanket over him, rolled down the hill almost into the river. In his semi-consciousness he heard a calf lowing across the river, which left an impression for fifty years. He slept again and, waking at four in the morning, was so stiff with cold he could not even rise. He called faintly, which attracted the attention of a searching party sent out for him, to the "outrageous joy" of his mother.

A susceptibility to sense impressions appeared in Scott when he was a baby. Having been lamed by fever so that he could neither walk nor creep, the doctor prescribed that he should live out of doors and lie in the "skin of a freshly killed sheep." One day he was left in the field and forgotten till a thunderstorm came up. His aunt, rushing out to carry him home, found him sitting on the grass clapping his hands at each flash of lightning and crying, "Bonny! Bonny!" In spite of his lameness he was the best and quickest fighter in his school.

Lamb was of the order of Cowper and Coleridge, a nerv-

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ous, timid, lonely and self-preoccupied boy, who had an impediment in his speech and avoided playing with other children.

Cunningham, when six years old, heard Burns read *Tam O'Shanter* in his (Cunningham's) father's cottage.

When Tom Moore was thirteen he was taken by his father to an Irish banquet in honor of the French revolution and sat on the chairman's knee while toasts to the French went round.

From boyhood the natural pugnacity of Byron was checked and either seethed without outlet or burst out in spectacular and often perverse displays of violence. Generally he suffered a moody and irritable childhood, between his cruel nurse whom he hated and feared, and his eccentric and tempestuous mother. In his fourth year he bit a large piece out of a china saucer "in a silent rage." Coming into the title at ten, he burst into tears when first called "dominus" at school.

Young Shelley played mostly with his four sisters, his brother John being fourteen years his junior. It was his practice to keep his little harem in constant terror with tales of mystery and wonder. The "Great Tortoise" that lived in Warnham Pond and the "Old Snake" in the gardens of Field Place were real entities to his sisters. When he was about ten he gave promise of his pyrotechnic future by setting a stack of fagots on fire, explaining to his sisters that he wanted a "little hell of his own."

The boy Bryant "was exceedingly frail and had a head the immensity of which troubled his anxious father. How to reduce it to normal size was a puzzle which Doctor Bryant solved by immersing the child, head and all, every morning in a spring of cold water." Bryant's grandfather was a severe magistrate who lived with the family, little William standing in great awe of him. Once he witnessed the whipping post in use, in execution of one of his grandfather's sentences for theft.

Keats was a young naturalist and trapper. At various times he took alive goldfinches, tomtits, minnows, mice, ticklebacks, dace, and cock-salmon—though the record of his snaring methods is not preserved. He was a famous little fighter, less

## THE YOUNG EGOISTS

in truculent self-assertiveness than by way of high chivalry and defense of the right. Once as a tiny boy, when his mother was ill and had been ordered perfect quiet, he got an old sword and stood guard at her door, forbidding all to enter. According to his school-fellow, E. Holmes, "He would fight any one—morning, noon and night, his brothers among the rest. It was meat and drink for him." Cowden Clarke narrates that upon one occasion while he was at the Enfield School, "when an usher, on account of some impertinent behavior, had boxed his brother Tom's ears, John rushed up, put himself in the received posture of offense, and, it was said, struck the usher—who could, so to say, have put him in his pocket. His passion at times was almost ungovernable; and his brother George, being the considerably taller and stronger, used frequently to hold him down by main force, laughing when John was in 'one of his moods' and endeavoring to beat him. . . . He was not merely the 'favourite of all,' like a pet prize-fighter, for his terrier courage; but his high-mindedness, his utter unconsciousness of a mean motive, his placability, his generosity, wrought so general a feeling in his behalf, that I have never heard a word of disapproval from any one, superior or equal, who had known him."

The environment of Somersby rectory, where Tennyson spent his childhood, was such as to enhance his obsession of his own greatness. It was a village islanded in desolation, a protected spot in the midst of dreary wastes, with a sense of distances around. Isolated in the rectory, surrounded by fogs rolling in from the North Sea, the twelve little Tennysons were important people in the universe. They played at jousts, or the future poet held them spell-bound with fanciful tales, or they acted old English plays. All idolized Alfred and presumed he would be an actor; but as he grew older, they encouraged him instead to be an author. Whatever he was to be, no one ever doubted that it would be something imposing. Thus from infancy he seems to have borne the weight of greatness on his shoulders. Like Keats he was early a naturalist, but his interest in the living world was more profound than that of his predecessor, more scientific and more humane. He made a practice of springing the traps of

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neighboring game-keepers. Once he accomplished the impressive feat of luring a young owl to him by imitating its cry. He was not, according to Nicholson, "except in physique, a very manly boy." When he went away to school, between the ages of eight and twelve, he moped and was miserable, preferring the admiring circle of his home. But gravity was his from the beginning and the instinct to prophesy for those who had ears to hear. Once his elder brother Fred, then at Eton, was shy of going to a party. "Fred," said Victoria's future laureate, "think of Herschel's great star-patches, and you will soon get over all that." He had a Calvinist aunt, however, who seems to have underestimated his mission. Once when he was a little boy, she said to him, "Alfred, when I look on you I think of the words of Holy Scripture: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' "

Browning was a "lively and mischievous" little boy who kept a child's diary in which he once inscribed, "Married two wives this morning." Like Scott he seems early to have been sensitive to visual and auditory impressions. On one occasion he excused himself for putting his mother's lace in the fire on the ground that it made "a pretty blaze." One evening, long after he had been put to bed, his mother was alone, playing the piano. She glanced around and saw little Robert who had crept down to listen. Suddenly he sprang into her arms, sobbing, and whispered, "Play! Play!"

In 1825 Whitman, aged six, was kissed by Lafayette on the occasion of the latter's visit to Brooklyn.

Swinburne, who became later one of the most fantastic figures in literature, led a normal, healthy and happy childhood in the country. He was unique only in his great buoyancy and charm, and the excessive vitality which made him always the leader in the play of his numerous band of brothers, sisters and cousins. The presage of the future lay in his precocious reading. When not playing, he was always curled up with a book in a corner, and when summoned to meals carried it there and continued.

One afternoon Hardy's mother returned from out of doors to find the baby asleep in his cradle with a large snake curled on his breast, asleep like himself. When very small he was

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taken by his father to witness the burning in effigy of the Pope and Cardinal Wiseman in the old Roman amphitheatre at Dorchester; he never forgot the lurid spectacle. Young Hardy always dramatized the church services. On wet Sunday mornings he would wrap himself in a table-cloth and read the morning prayers standing on a chair, while his cousin sat below, calling loud "Amens," and his grandmother represented the congregation. He would then deliver a sermon, mimicking the phrases of the vicar. He was precocious in his music, being able to tune a violin at four. At thirteen he played for the dancing at village weddings and in the farmers' parlors.

As a child Francis Thompson entertained his sisters with conjuror's tricks, and a model theatre with marionettes. He also liked history, war and battles, and at eleven he organized a pirate band in school. But generally he was happy only with his mother and sisters, and appreciated his happiness with a frightened foreboding of its transiency, living in a constant panic at the prospect of growing into mature responsibility.

Stephen Phillips was a young rebel of the scornful and egotistical variety. "His elders found him an ungovernable child at the Grammar Schools of Stratford-on-Avon and Peterborough. . . . He was contemptuous of his teachers, showing amusement at their limitations. . . ." Also he made himself unpopular with his classmates, and on one occasion came home so badly beaten that he had to be put in the hands of a physician.

### FURTHER REFERENCE FOR THIS SECTION

Page 18, Blake. See his visions in childhood, "Miscellaneous Aberrations," p. 467.

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The usual assumption is, I believe, that sons are especially attached to their mothers, daughters to their fathers. Add to this the further supposition that poets, being generally men, have a larger share of feminine sensitiveness than most of

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their sex, and it is not surprising to find many of them remarkably sensitive to, even imaginatively dependent on, their mothers, and devoted to them throughout life.

Donne was brought up tenderly and never punished. His connections with the nobility were through his mother, which may partially have accounted for his life-long devotion to her, for Donne was that rare thing among poets, a snob. However that may be, he was always solicitous for her, and when at last he achieved financial stability in the shape of the Deanship of St. Paul's, he immediately installed the then aged lady with him in the Deanery, though it was unnecessary to do so for her comfort.

The mother of Cowley, he being posthumously born, directed his mind into literary channels, and managed in her poverty to obtain for him a good education.

While living with Sir William Temple, at Moore Park, in his twenties, Swift visited his mother at Leicester annually, travelling on foot, unless weather compelled a wagon, and sleeping at penny lodgings where he purchased clean sheets for 6d.

Pope was devoted to both parents, but especially to his mother, and was never long absent from her, living with her against his own convenience until her death in 1733, when he was 45. He was her only child—that status being little altered by the presence of a much older half-sister who presently married Cooper the portrait painter—and she petted and spoiled him, and was on the watch for early indications of artistic instinct.

The only unnatural mother of a poet seems to have been the Countess of Macclesfield, natural mother of Richard Savage by Earl Rivers, who, according to Doctor Johnson, would have given the child a decent up-bringing if left to his own devices. The details of the story are no doubt colored by the moral indignation of the categorical doctor; but the melodrama at mildest is a harsh one. Immediately upon his birth, his mother put him out to nurse with a Mrs. Porlock, the wife of a baker, with instructions that he should never know his origins. When Earl Rivers, in his last sickness, asked for the boy and would have provided for him along with his sev-

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eral other natural children, she assured him that the infant was dead. Subsequently she tried to send him without name or funds to Virginia and, being dissuaded from that, saw to his apprenticing to a shoemaker. But when he was sixteen he came home from work one day to find his foster-mother dead and, going through her effects, found letters from his grandmother, Lady Mason, which revealed to him the theretofore unsuspected secret of his birth. He appealed passionately to his mother by letter and through friends, but he got no reply and she ordered that he be excluded from her house. Thereafter he used to spend his evenings walking backward and forward before her door, hoping to see her "come by accident to the window, or cross her apartment with a candle in her hand." "One evening, so keeping his vigil in the street that she inhabited, he saw the door of her house by accident open; he entered it, and, finding no person in the passage to hinder him, went upstairs to salute her. She discovered him before he could enter her chamber, alarmed the family with the most distressful outcries, and when she had by her screams gathered them about her, ordered them to drive out of the house that villain, who had forced himself in upon her, and endeavored to murder her. Savage, who had attempted with the most submissive tenderness to soften her rage, hearing her utter so detestable an accusation, thought it prudent to retire; and, I believe, never attempted afterwards to speak to her." From this time forward Savage blossomed rapidly into the spectacular wretch whose doings will be found scattered through many of the later sections of this book. His relation with his mother became entirely malicious on her part, malicious and mercenary on his, and equally shameless on the part of each. On the occasion of his conviction of murder she seems to have almost succeeded in thwarting the pardon sought for him by many writers and nobles; and thereafter she frustrated several projects for succoring him in his starving poverty, and generally did her utmost to cut him off "from the possibility of sustaining life." When his policy toward her changed from one of supplication to one of blackmail she replied with defiant silence; and when the retaliatory—though truly noble—satire *The Bastard* was the

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success of the hour, our last picture of this abandoned old cuckoo shows her at Bath sitting adamantine in her chair while the fashionable world read and recited in her hearing passages from her warrant of immortal disrepute. In most cases the poetic quest for truth can be traced to the early maternal relationship, to the desire, in the view of the Freudian romances, for a return to the comfort of the prenatal dark. In the case of Savage, where the relationship was perfectly perverted and the psychic return absolutely denied, the tie seems by its bitterness to have been none-the-less passionate. The unnatural and lifelong wrenching of it made it in fact stronger and more dominant, and instead of a warm but obscure and subconscious stimulus it became an immediate and conscious motive, not only the cause of the poet's defiant profligacy but the express subject of his best work. His poetry as it is deserves a better reputation than it enjoys today; but if the maternal impulsion had been allowed to work naturally to broaden his outlook instead of unnaturally to narrow it, the violent and pathetic figure of Savage might have stood among the great.

On account of his cruelty, Mrs. Gray obtained a legal separation from her husband, and through great personal sacrifices, the establishment of a millinery shop with a sister, and the assistance of her brother, a fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, she managed to give her son a good education. Gray was congenial with his mother always. During his maturity at Cambridge, he spent part of every autumn with her and two adoring aunts at Stoke-Pogis "in the warm atmosphere of musk and pot-pourri."

Cowper's mother died when he was six, and he always remembered her with emotion.

Coleridge's mother was a competent woman in whom the youngest of her nine children failed to find the sympathy he desperately needed. Not until he was introduced, at sixteen, into the family of his school friend, Evans, did he find the domestic kindness and affection he required; and he acclaimed Mrs. Evans as his foster-mother.

Mrs. Landor's devotion to her children was of a solicitous and prudent rather than an ambitious variety. She knew

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nothing of literature and looked upon her eldest son's exertions "with a vague respect not unmixed with alarm." When she heard of the *Imaginary Conversations* she wrote to this disquieting boy of forty-nine: "For God's sake do not hurt your eyes, nor rack your brains too much, to amuse the world by writing; but take care of your health, which will be of greater use to your family."

Byron's mother, the tempestuous Catherine Gordon of Gight, was a trial to him. Her affection for him was normal enough, but her expressions of it were remarkable in the extreme. Although well born, she was brought up in illiteracy, in spite of which she acquired a taste for good books, wrote vivid and inelegant letters, and criticized her son's poetry shrewdly. But she always remained provincial and uncouth, with a remarkably violent temper which found vent in throwing china at its immediate object. Her paroxysms of fury alternated with gusts of maudlin tenderness for her son, both equally revolting to him. At length his mother attacked him with the fire irons with intent to kill. He fled to London, and thereafter pursued a course of deception, lest she haunt and disgrace him.

Keats got his passion and his sensuousness from his mother, though it is likely that his intellect and his character came rather from his father. Both parents were devoted to the prospect of elevating their children's position in the world, an ideal which all the boys, and especially John, fulfilled. He remained devoted to his mother after his father's death and her remarriage. During her last illness he frequently sat up with her all night, administering her nourishment. He was fourteen when she died of consumption. In his desolation he hid himself under the master's desk at school.

Browning's nerves collapsed when his mother died, he being then thirty-seven, and it took him six months to recover. She was a gentle sensitive person, half German, half Scotch, with a talent for music.

Tennyson's mother was a great beauty with a sense of humor, who refused twenty-five offers of marriage. She loved to play with the children when they were young, but as she grew older she became gentle, timid, delicate and senti-

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mental, as was fitting in the times. She was awed by her big, somber sons, and had a "facility for tears" which on one occasion caused the most awesome of them to stalk the room shouting, "Oh, damn your eyes, mother! Damn your eyes!" Once on the omnibus at Cheltenham she informed her fellow passengers, "It may interest you to know that I am the mother of the Laureate." She was effusively religious and wrote "Ally," at the appearance of the *Idylls*, how pleased she was that at last a "spirit of Christianity" was creeping into his work. She kept a tame monkey.

Poe's mother, a pathetic second-rate actress, died of consumption when Edgar was almost three, having exhausted herself trying to support her three babies after their father's disappearance or death two years before. His young foster-mother, Frances, wife of John Allan, died when he was twenty.

Whitman's mother was Dutch, devoted, earthy, shrewd, humorous, kindly and illiterate—could neither spell nor punctuate. Whitman probably loved her more than any person in the world, she accounting for his penchant for "powerful, uneducated persons." She survived till he was fifty-four.

Swinburne's mental and facial character came from his mother. She was literary and founded him early in the Bible, Italian, French and history—but no fiction—inaugurating his habit of voluminous reading.

Stevenson was taught to love poetry by his mother from whom also he inherited weak lungs and physical frailty generally.

Francis Thompson's mother went Catholic on her own hook, before she met her husband, and against her family's wishes. She failed of admission to a convent, worked as a governess, and met and married Doctor Thompson when she was thirty-two. Francis clung to her in his frightened childhood, writing later of the "world-wide desolation and terror, for the first time, realizing that the mother can lose you, or you her, and your own abysmal loneliness and helplessness without her." She survived till he was twenty-one, and if she had lived longer she would probably have effected a reconcilia-

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tion of father and son before it was too late. After her death Doctor Thompson married again.

The following poets, including some already named, lost their mothers before they were twenty-two: Marvell (seventeen), Gay (six), Shenstone (lack exact age), Cowper (six), Lamb (twenty-one), Wordsworth (eight), Drake ("small boy"), Keats (fourteen), Elizabeth Barrett (nineteen), Poe (two), Emily Brontë (three), Meredith (five), Thompson (twenty-one).

As it is the mother's function to concern herself with the person of the child—that is, to spoil him or encourage his self-importance which is his poetic tendency, the father generally exercises a complementary concern for his place in the social and economic scheme. However colored or perverted by possessive emotion, the father's active influence on his son tends to follow a mental pattern—How, in the first place, is the boy going to get on economically?—Or, his financial security being assured, what sort of a place is he going to take in the community? Is he going to deport himself according to the best and most honorable social and moral standards—that is, those standards which I, the father, in my wisdom have conceived as the best and most honorable for him? Or is he going to be a waster and a disgrace to his family and tradition—that is, to me? These are the paternal concerns, and since most fathers are sound members of society, and since by the standards of society poetry is an unprofitable, self-indulgent, and usually somehow a dishonorable business, it is not surprising that the young poet and his socially minded parent seldom envisage his future eye to eye. The relationship is fraught with tragedy in cases where the father is neither pompous nor intolerant but truly concerned with and ready to make sacrifices for the boy's happiness, thus enlisting filial devotion, while being at the same time pathetically blind to the significance of his son's bent and striving by the gentlest of methods to divert it. The relationship is sordid where the parent is arbitrary and dictatorial. The happy exceptions are first, those cases in which the father is himself of a literary, or at least of an intellectual, turn of mind, so that the son's ambitions coincide

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with his notions of the good life, and secondly, the surprisingly large number of cases where the poet has been left fatherless at an early age and so free to choose his own way without the assistance of this powerful influence that is at once so intimate and so frequently alien.

Gawain Douglas, born 1474, was the youngest son of the famous fifth Earl of Angus, known as "Bell the Cat." Elementary education was rare in that noble family, and the father's interest in letters is expressed in the couplet,

Thanks to St. Botham, son of mine,  
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line.

Denham's father, Sir John, died when the poet was twenty-three, whereupon he resumed the gambling habit he had foregone and quickly ran through his inheritance.

Milton always loved his father and attributed his ultimate success to his discerning taste and early fostering care—an attitude, by the way, quite agreeable to the poet's often expressed scorn for the female rôle in existence. John, senior, had been cut off by his father, a "substantial yeoman," because of religious differences, and had set up as a scrivener in Broad Street, Cheapside, London, under the sign of the Spread Eagle, the family crest. While practising his profession he retained a primary interest in music, chiefly as a composer. He encouraged his own son's intellectual pretensions, requiring the maid to sit up for him when the solemn little boy read late into the night. And in the young poet's five-year period of post-university groping, vaguely preparing himself for some great work the nature of which was unknown, the father not only let him alone but encouraged and out of his semi-poverty continued to support him in his eccentric and apparently unprofitable way of life. John Milton, senior, stands high in the register of sympathetic parents of genius.

Marvell's father was rector of Winestead and Trinity Church, Hull, highly educated, beloved by his parishioners, behaved heroically during the plague, was grave in carriage and facetious in discourse. When Andrew was nineteen the

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Reverend Marvell was drowned in a sudden storm while crossing the Humber River with a couple whom he was about to marry. It is reported that as he entered the boat he shouted "Ho for Heaven!," and threw his cane on the bank, saying that if he perished it should go to his son. Mrs. Skinner, the mother of the unfortunate bride, is reputed to have provided for the orphaned poet thereafter, and to have left him her fortune.

Gray's father was cruel, "violent, jealous, and probably mad," and his wife obtained a legal separation from him. Though wealthy, he refused to educate Thomas. When the latter was twenty-five, his father squandered his entire fortune in building a country estate at Wanstead, and died shortly in a paroxysm of gout.

The influence, or lack of influence, of Coleridge's father might, had he lived, have been congenial to the development of the poet. He kept a free grammar school in the vicarage at Ottery St. Mary, Devon, and had "considerable learning as a linguist, mathematician" and antiquary. He was notable for generosity, unpractical naïveté, guileless piety and "more than physical short-sightedness," generally "a native eccentricity as loveable for simple unworldliness . . . as laughable in some of its manifestations." He was so near-sighted that once at a dinner party he was tricked into stuffing part of a lady's gown into his waistcoat, thinking it was his own shirt. He died when his youngest son, Samuel, was nine.

Gifford was the son of a house-painter and a glazier. Both parents dying when he was small, his godfather—a man who presumably had profited at the expense of the parents—acted as his foster-father. At thirteen he placed the lad on a coasting vessel where he served as "a ship-boy on the high and giddy mast" and a menial in the cabin. He was penniless and ragged, and being often seen in this condition on the beach of his native village, the compassionate fish-women at length raised such a hue of gossip against the foster-father that he put him back in school. But the scandal being quieted, he withdrew him when he was fifteen and apprenticed him to a shoemaker, whence the talented and

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ambitious youth only escaped later through the chance discovery of some of his doggerel by a neighboring surgeon.

Captain John Byron of the Guards was "dazzlingly handsome and very dissipated." He ran away with and later married Amelia d'Arcy, wife of the Marquis of Carmarthen, and had by her one child, Augusta. Presently Amelia died and he married his "Golden Dotty," the eccentric Catherine Gordon of Gight, squandered her fortune, deserted her and died, leaving her to retire to Aberdeen to bring up the little boy, George Gordon, on £130 a year.

Sir Timothy Shelley goes down as one of the villains in the history of poetry, his ignorant bigotry and stubborn adherence to class and convention not only exceeding his affection for his son but militating vindictively to ruin the latter. This is not a tragedy of uncomprehending but generous intentions, such as we shall see in the case of Francis Thompson's father, where the poet must bear at least a share of the blame. This is a case of deliberate, dictatorial persecution and indifference to the son's fate so long as he failed to toe the paternal chalk line. After Shelley's expulsion from Oxford there was a harsh correspondence in which the poet, then seventeen, proposed to give up his inheritance. There followed a temporary reconciliation and an allowance, conditioned on Shelley's refraining from seeing his friend and co-liberal, Hogg. The allowance was stopped upon his marriage, when nineteen, to Harriet Westbrook, she being beneath the Shelleys in social station. After desperate borrowings, paternal indifference and some assistance from an uncle, Captain Pilford, Shelley tried to see his father, but was referred to his lawyer. At length the allowance of £200 was restored, "to prevent my cheating strangers." When Ianthe was born no further help was forthcoming, but Uncle Medwin stepped into the breach. In 1814 Shelley, being then twenty-two, and the father of two children by Harriet—one in *esse* and one expected—visited the family at Field Place for the first time since his expulsion from Oxford. A reconciliation would then have been easy, but instead Timothy made his son feel unwelcome. Indeed, so panicky was this patriotic M. P. of being detected harboring a liberal and

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an atheist—albeit his son—that he compelled Bysshe to masquerade under the name of “Captain Jones,” and to wear, when on the public highways, the uniform of a young officer then visiting the Shelleys. In the careful opinion of Peck, if Timothy had then tolerated a reconciliation and received Harriet, whom the family continued consistently to snub, the whole domestic tragedy, then impending, might have been averted.

Thomas Keats, father of the poet, was head ostler in the Swan and Hoop livery stables of John Jennings, and married his employer’s daughter. He seems, by the impression he left, to have been a man of sound sense and respectable demeanor, and was ambitious for the future of his children. There is every reason to suppose that he would have encouraged his eldest son’s genius had he not, on returning from a visit to John and George at the Enfield School in the former’s tenth year, fallen from his horse, struck his head against an iron paling and died a few hours later.

Bryant’s father, the country doctor of Cummington, Massachusetts, was typical of the agrarian civilization of New England—poor, severe in discipline, well educated, sympathetic to the intellectual aspirations of his family. A bundle of birchen rods, which William himself had been required to gather, stood always in the corner. But when Doctor Bryant, in William’s eighteenth year, discovered *Thanatopsis* and other manuscript in the family desk, he at once saw to their publication in *The North American Review*.

The Reverend William Emerson died when Ralph was eight years old, and the Reverend Doctor Frothingham consoled him on his death-bed by saying that at least he had outlived his teeth.

The paternal Whittier spoke for all fathers when he replied with emotion to William Lloyd Garrison’s importunities on behalf of the sickly youth who had already contributed to *The Free Press*, “Sir, poetry will not give him bread.”

Longfellow’s father seems to have inspired no awe in the poet, who wrote to him thus freely in his seventh year: “Dear Papa,—Ann wants a little Bible like Betsey’s. Will

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you please buy her one, if you can find any in Boston. . . . I wish you to buy me a drum."

Holmes's father, the minister, before giving his young son the run of his large library, carefully cut from every volume, including the classics, those pages which might possibly smirch little Oliver's purity of mind.

The disappearance of Poe's own actor-father when Edgar was less than a year old, and his virtual adoption during his third year by John Allan, a respectable merchant of Richmond, placed the latter, for all practical purposes, in the paternal rôle. The subsequent tragedy was in some way similar to that of the Thompsons, father and son, in other ways more like that of the Shelleys. In the main, especially during the early years, Mr. Allan was long-suffering and at least tolerant of his foster-child's arrogances and weaknesses. There is, however, some evidence that he was prone to remind Edgar that he was a gentleman by sufferance; and in the end the picture of the distracted merchant excluding the desperate poet from his room and cutting him off in his will suggests rather the behavior of Sir Timothy Shelley. At the outset, although his own fortunes were sometimes badly depleted, he gave the boy the best possible education, and showed not only pride in his academic successes but sympathy with his early ventures in verse. It was during the year at the University of Virginia that Mr. Allan's anxiety and disapproval began to appear, not with the youth's poetry or opinions, for there seem to have been neither poetry nor opinions at this time, but with his inordinate dissipations and extravagances beyond his means. Mr. Allan contributed only moral reproaches and specifically refused to pay his debts. The whole truth of the relationship at this time may never be known, but the presumption is that the foster-father's disapproval had nothing to do with poetry. Poe had fallen into conventional dissipations and pretensions and had thereby laid himself open to conventional reproach. Probably Mr. Allan failed somewhere in understanding, but from his previous conduct it may be suspected that if Poe in his excesses had posed as a genius rather than as a fashionable rake the relationship would have remained more sympathetic.

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However that may be, it was strained from this time forward, and Mr. Allan stands henceforth as the self-righteous and accusing father, willing to perform his minimal parental obligations according to conventional canons, but willing likewise to recognize the dissolution of those obligations by the same canons. At length he obtained for the boy a cadet's warrant at West Point, believing that military discipline would be good for him, although Poe entered the institution only to please him, and within a few months connived at his own dismissal from the Academy. About the same time a letter defamatory of Mr. Allan fell into the latter's hands. Mr. Allan despaired, endorsed on one of Edgar's letters, "I do not think the boy has one good quality," and informed him that he was disinherited. This was in 1831, when Poe was twenty-two. Mr. Allan's mind had now set implacably in its mold of outraged propriety. Just before his death, in 1834, the desperate poet entered his room by force. The foster-father, dying as he was, drove him out with his cane; and Edgar was nowhere mentioned in his will.

Tennyson's grandfather got rich, discovered that he was descended from the Plantagenets through a branch of that family called D'Eyncourt, and required his two sons to adopt that surname. The Reverend George, father of Alfred, refused to do this, but his brother Charles complied. Whereupon George was disinherited in favor of Charles, which increased in the former "the congenital bile of the Tennysons. . . . Tall, swarthy, despondent, the Rector would loom about the lanes" in knee breeches and silver buckles, stern always, stingy generally, "amazing sharp to his children . . . with outbursts of irritation followed by long spells of even blacker gloom." Yet he was a "scholar and a lover of books, . . . interested in the plastic arts and in the works of his own hands"—exemplified in his unique Gothic refectory, and he criticized his children's poems. He was taken mortally ill while Alfred was in Cambridge, and the future laureate was called home, giving first a farewell dinner in his rooms, where "they all danced together a parting quadrille." The father died shortly thereafter, in Alfred's twenty-second year. The family was allowed to stay on a

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while in the rectory, then they scattered, and the home was broken up.

On account of the difficulties with his own father, as in the case of Milton senior, Browning's father, again like Milton's, was wisely tolerant of his son's proclivities. His own parent had sniffed at his desire to be a painter, and his jealous step-mother contrived that, instead of being sent to university, he should be dispatched to the West Indies to manage his mother's properties there. He hated slavery, and his experience in the West Indies was so loathsome that he would shut his eyes when that period of his life was mentioned; there was some horrid, unrevealed episode associated in his mind with the word "blood," for he blanched whenever the word was used in his presence. He quit his job there in a year and returned to England. His father presented him with a bill for his up-bringing—the boy having already inherited some property from a maternal uncle—and put him to work in the Bank of England. Thereafter he lived comfortably on his inheritance and a good salary from the Bank, married when he was twenty-one, was never ill, and died at eighty-four, having shortly before announced that "Death is no enemy in my eyes." He was a tremendous reader with a talent for drawing, a facility in rhyming, a taste for collecting old books and engravings which he was able to indulge, had a perfect temper, a scorn for the practical matters of life and a flair for teaching that made him supervise closely and assist wisely in the education of his children. If it be assumed that a poet thrives on encouragement better than on frustration, Browning *père* stands as the ideal father of a poet. The poet had in himself and his home almost every advantage of inheritance and environment. His father stood ready to abet him in music, drama, poetry or whatever intellectual pursuit the boy might choose for himself. And the crowning touch of sanity in this happy relationship lay in the fact that the tastes of father and son differed in detail; they enjoyed different pictures and different music, and the father did not like the son's verses—though he paid for the publication of the early books.

Whitman's ascetic-looking, peasant-like father is supposed

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by Holloway to have given the boy a transcendental turn.

Rossetti's father was a man of learning, a poet and an educator, an *improvisatore* and reciter, the author of much political and mystical verse, and personally lively, sociable and affectionate. In early life he was librettist to the San Carlo Theatre, and afterwards curator of the Naples Museum. He served in the Department of Public Instruction under King Murat, was proscribed upon the restoration of Ferdinand I, escaped to England and became professor of Italian in King's College, London. His home was the Mecca for Italians visiting England.

Stevenson got his love of the sea from his father, a lighthouse builder come of a family of lighthouse builders. He destined the child for the family profession, but his hopes were frustrated by the boy's frail health.

The relation between Francis Thompson and his father was one of those real tragedies whose cause lay in the exotic and fiercely secretive pride of the poet's nature rather than in any dictatorial intolerance of the parent. Doctor Thompson was converted to Catholicism, charged small fees, had a great reputation for kindness among his many patients, was pious, and immediately baptized new-born babies who showed any danger of dying. He encouraged Francis's religious zeal but it was so natural a growth in the son that his disappointment was as great as his father's when he failed to qualify for the priesthood—a disappointment which the poet characteristically concealed under a show of indifference. There followed eight years in which Doctor Thompson successively exposed his son to medicine, law, miscellaneous aspects of commerce and the army. Then one day when Francis was twenty-six, his father suddenly charged him with alcoholism because of his flush—which was in fact due to opium. Immediately Francis made a small bundle, left the house and the next day went to London. He saw his father only once again, during a short visit two years later at the house of a friend, though each remained affectionate, exaggerating the estrangement of the other. Also, even after Thompson's reputation had dawnd he did not want his father to know of his still shabby circumstances—but Doctor

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Thompson learned and secretly sent him help through Bishop Carroll. And when he saw his son's name coupled in criticism with Shakespeare, Keats and Tennyson, he exclaimed, "If only the lad had told me!" Once, when they were near each other in Wales, Francis called on him, but he had left. And when Doctor Thompson was dying, the poet, as was his life-long habit, arrived too late.

Since the emotional sympathy between father and daughter corresponds somewhat to that between mother and son, it might be expected that the influence of fathers on their poetic daughters might on the whole be more salutary than that on their poetic sons. The small amount of evidence, however, does not justify this expectation. The inference seems to be rather that, however strong the relationship may be in its emotional basis, in expression it follows, as in the case of sons, a mental pattern, an expectation that the girl shall walk in the path her parent has envisaged for her, irrespective of her own desires and proclivities.

The father of Joanna Baillie seems to have been an iceberg of a minister, in whose house "repression of all emotions, even the gentlest, and those most honourable to human nature," was the "constant lesson." Miss Baillie's sister Agnes reported of him that "when she had once been bitten by a dog thought to be mad, he had sucked the wound, at the hazard, as was supposed, of his own life, but that he had never given her a kiss."

Mr. Barrett stands as the pathological arch villain in the gallery of poets' parents, epitomizing at once all the ugliest qualities of the grasping proprietor and the egotistical dissembler, galvanized upon a personality natively passionate and probably affectionate. He was a wealthy slave-owner and considered himself likewise the owner of his children, bolstering up his possessiveness with frequent and gloomy recitations from scripture enjoining obedience on all but himself, and on himself the duty of exacting obedience. It is not recorded that he ever considered the claims or wishes of another. Elizabeth was the eldest in a family of eleven, and his favorite child. After her mother's death, when the girl was nineteen, he leaned on her for support, and "wher-

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ever he leant he leant heavily." The ascription to him of abnormal impulses toward his daughter seems gratuitous and unnecessary, for the most normal affections, repressed as his were, must turn sour and violent in expression. Elizabeth rewarded his tyrannical dependence with grateful and submissive devotion, but, mixed with her sentiments, she had just enough of his own wilfulness to make her great choice possible. Mr. Barrett entertained no one in his house, and was determined that no love should enter there. Any thought that his children should devote their lives otherwise than to him would have been treason. He permitted his daughters to entertain callers in their rooms, but such callers were not thereby admitted to his hospitality, and generally the anti-social régime he imposed kept away all but kinsmen and—at least in one instance—the friends of kinsmen. When the instance referred to had at length shattered his armor of security he stood ugly, alone and unshaken. After Elizabeth's elopement he never answered her communications. When, four and a half years later, she wrote asking him to see her child, he returned all of her letters with the seals unbroken and replied violently to Browning's appeal. Elizabeth was not mentioned in his will. A prodigy of a man. And yet, when his eldest daughter had shown a precocious flair for letters, he had encouraged her in every way and helped her to an education beyond most women of her time, with the result that, even while he was slowly murdering her in her darkened room she was already one of the three or four leading poets of the realm and a candidate for the laureateship. It was Browning's love that called out her one effort that may endure, but it is at least arguable that without the earlier background of books and enforced introversion her responsive song might never have been uttered.

Mr. Dickinson seems to have been a somewhat less hectic and spectacular edition of Mr. Barrett. He was a leading lawyer and pillar of the church who dressed in specially neat broadcloth, wore a specially glossy beaver, carried a specially fine cane and had a decorative weakness for horses. He was much concerned over Emily's untoward vivacity, and when

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at meals she became too witty, especially when she discussed the Bible characters irreverently, he would silently leave the table. An early collision between the wills of father and daughter occurred in the matter of Sunday-school. One Sunday morning Mr. Dickinson announced that everybody in the house must be ready to leave for attendance in ten minutes. Emily vanished as if ready to comply, but could not be found in ten minutes, nor after a search of the house. Mr. Dickinson led his depleted flock to the weekly ritual, and returning two hours later, found Emily seated in the cellarway, ready with the legalistic explanation that this situation removed her from the status of those "in the house." There was in the family china cupboard a certain nicked plate which Emily twice set before her father, and for which carelessness she was twice reprimanded. After the second reprimand Emily disappeared with the plate and was presently found smashing it behind the barn. But withal, Emily was afraid of her father. When she was very little he called her to his knee, and opened his gold watch and instructed her, completely but only once, in the mysteries of telling time; as a result of which Emily was so frightened that she never learned to read clocks correctly until she was fifteen, being afraid to confess to her father that she had not understood, and equally afraid, if she should ask some one else to teach her, that he would learn of it. Mr. Dickinson said that books were "full of lies" and forbade his children to read anything but the Bible. Once the brother Austin brought home Longfellow's *Kavanagh*, hid it under the pianoforte cover, made signs to Emily and they both afterward read it. Again a friend brought them *Letters from New York* and hid it in a big box-tree by the front door. After Emily had read a little way, she thought, "This then is a book and there are more of them." But in spite of all this rebelliousness, Emily not only feared but loved her father, and he dominated her life from beginning to end. There was a deep, unspoken intimacy between them, and she wrote, "If father is asleep on the lounge the house is full." From the time of his death she never left the house except to flit about the porch watering her plants, and to sit in the

garden. From the psychoanalytical point of view this picture of parental cannibalism is not a pretty one. Yet out of it rose Emily's eremitic existence, and out of her eremitic existence rose her poetry. For what Emily was we must thank her father. What she might have been otherwise is anybody's guess.

The following poets lost their fathers before they were twenty-two: Marvell (nineteen), Rowe (nineteen), Prior (small boy), Gay (six), Savage (infancy), Ramsay (infancy), Thomson (twenty), Shenstone (ten), Smart (eleven), Gifford (father replaced by godfather), Beattie, Bloomfield, Southey, Lamb (twenty-one), Coleridge (nine), Wordsworth (thirteen), Byron, Drake, Keats, Emerson (eight), Tennyson (twenty-one), Poe (one) (father replaced by foster-father).

Although the number of poets mentioned in this section is small, I offer the following summary for what it is worth. The parental influence on the poets may be considered in either of two aspects: its personal congeniality and sympathy, or the opposite; its specific encouragement and assistance in the direction of poetry, or the opposite.

First, respecting the mothers of poets, of whom eighteen are mentioned:

Of these there seem to have been thirteen whose relationship with their children was congenial and intimate, and who remained a stimulating influence, even in those cases where they died while the poets were children: namely, the mothers of Donne, Cowley, Pope, Gray, Cowper, Keats, Browning, Tennyson, Poe (foster-mother), Whitman, Swinburne, Stevenson, F. Thompson. And of these six specifically encouraged their children in the direction of poetry: namely, the mothers of Cowley, Pope, Gray, Keats, Swinburne, Stevenson.

Against thirteen mothers whose influence was favorable we have only three whose influence was on the whole obstructive; namely, the mothers of Savage, Coleridge, and Byron.

And, classifying the fathers in the same way, and omitting the several instances where no special relationship or influence is discernible, we find, of the twenty-six mentioned,

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only two whose personal sympathy with their children seems to have been stimulating; namely, the fathers of Milton and Browning; and only six (including Milton, senior, and Browning, senior) who specifically encouraged their children in the direction of poetry or letters; namely, the fathers of Milton, Keats, Bryant, Browning, Tennyson, Rossetti.

Against six fathers whose influence was on the whole favorable, we have twelve whose influence was on the whole obstructive; namely, the fathers of Thompson, Douglas, Gascoigne, Gray, Joanna Baillie, Gifford (foster-father), Byron, Shelley, Whittier, Poe (foster-father), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (listed here on the assumption that Mr. Barrett's spiritual tyranny more than offset his indulgence in the matter of education), and probably Emily Dickinson.

The inference is that there is something in the maternal-filial relationship itself which is emotionally stimulating to the poet, whether or not it be accompanied by specific encouragement; while the paternal-filial relationship is not in itself stimulating but is useful only when expressed in terms of practical assistance. But even in terms of specific literary encouragement, the number of fathers who have been of value to their poetical children is small in comparison to the number of helpful mothers; and we arrive at the dismal suspicion that the young poets, as *poets*, and disregarding the essential of material support, could well dispense with their fathers entirely! And this suspicion is strengthened when we contemplate the formidable list of twenty-two poets who lost their fathers before they were twenty-two, most of them in early boyhood. These were: Marvell, Rowe, Prior, Gay, Ramsay, Savage, Thomson, Shenstone, Smart, Beattie, Bloomfield, Southey, Lamb, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Gifford (foster-father), Byron, Drake, Keats, Tennyson, Poe (foster-father), Emerson. Surely poetry is an impractical and an anti-social business, and the death of the fathers of genius is at once a worldly calamity and a glad release for the muse. Nor, although the mother's influence is more benign, can we entirely overlook the fact that twelve poets lost their mothers before they were twenty-two: namely, Marvell, Gay, Shenstone,

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Cowper, Lamb, Wordsworth, Drake, Keats, Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett, Poe (mother replaced by a foster-mother who in turn died when he was twenty), Meredith and Thompson; and that of these Marvell, Gay, Shenstone, Wordsworth, Lamb, Drake, Keats and Poe were complete orphans. Can it be that poets are exotics who thrive best on their own secret preoccupations, without the directing influence of parental roots? It is possible only to observe that in many cases they have so flourished—at least *as poets*, however they may have suffered as physical bodies requiring food: out of forty-nine poets mentioned, fourteen fatherless, four motherless, and eight orphans—a total of twenty-six who lost one or both parents before maturity. The essence of the poet, his point of departure, is himself alone.

Along with four or five friends, wives, and lovers, three sisters of poets take their places in the small gallery of the essential partners of genius. Each of these remarkable relationships was in some way unhealthy, but each was the stabilizing influence in the poet's life, without which he would have been less than, surely other than, the figure he was. Dorothy Wordsworth stands unrivalled as the greatest of the poets' women. Mary Lamb was the gentle, perfectly understanding companion of Charles for thirty-eight years. Augusta Byron was the one consistently stabilizing influence throughout her brother's life. Each of these women will be mentioned later in the section on "Love." I note them here in passing because their relationships to their respective brothers were rooted in childhood.

Other valuable sisters were Lavinia Dickinson who kept the sacred house and profane strangers out of it, and "Sister Sue" Dickinson, the sister-in-law who lived next door, and for whom much of the early poetry was written and left in the garden hedge.

Brothers have not often played any part in the lives of the poets. There was Wordsworth's sailor brother John, who contributed moral and financial support during the dark creative years. There were George and Tom Keats who "worshipped" John and were sedulous, from the moment of his poetic beginnings, in making transcripts of his poems.

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There was Elizabeth Barrett's brother, Edward, her only real companion from girlhood, whose drowning at Torquay in her thirty-second year nearly killed her. There was the whole literary Brontë family, including the drunken Bramwell whom Emily alone loved and whom she rescued from death when he set his bed afire. There was Emily Dickinson's brother, Austin, who wore a red wig.

Among miscellaneous individuals who have given direction to the childhoods of the poets, there was Wordsworth's master at the Hawks Head Grammar School, William Taylor, that "singularly gentle and humorous person" who, although he died at thirty-two, became the old man in *Two April Mornings* and the *Fountain* and probably also in *Expostulation and Reply*, *The Tables Turned* and *Matthew*. Also there was Shelley's friend at Eton, the reverend Royal Physician, Doctor Lind, who handed him Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* which was to affect him more than anything he ever read, and to whom generally he owed "far more than to my father." And there was Aunt Mary Moody Emerson, the "dwarf, four feet three inches tall," the "autocrat" and "prophetess" shaking her calvinistic finger at the "poor, pale . . . humanitarianism of the day," who was so in love with death that she stitched her own shroud and wore it first as a nightgown and then as a day gown, and was seen wandering on horseback through the streets of Concord wearing it under a scarlet shawl, while she "had her bed made in the form of a coffin" and invoked the "dear worms—most valuable companions!" yet could not die. There was Stevenson's "covenanting" nurse, "Cummie," who instilled in him a great terror of Hell whose roars he heard in the wind on stormy nights, who told him that cards were the "devil's books," and they used to pray long together that his parents might not be doomed for playing the decorous family whist to which they were addicted. And there was Francis Thompson's whole fanatical family, pious parents, sisters bound for the nunnery, a cousin—male—who boomed the psalms in his sleep so loudly that none else in the house could rest, two aunts who were nuns, and many other kin of religious and other-worldly tendencies.

## PRECOCITY

The Duchess of Newcastle—never celebrated for her reticence—duly recorded that, “It pleased God to command his servant Nature, to indue me with a poetical and philosophical genius even from my birth.” There are many such decorative claims, but the documented evidence is on the whole more arresting. The average age at which poets begin to write verse is somewhere between twelve and sixteen. To justify a claim to precocity, verse must be composed before the twelfth birthday.

Chatterton at ten wrote fluent, mature poetry, and there are earlier verses of doubtful date.

Trumbull memorized all of Doctor Watts’s lyrics as soon as he could talk, and when he was four composed imitations of them. The undoubted precocity of this prodigy in other lines lends some credence to this report.

Wordsworth began to write verses at ten, and Scott before he was twelve.

At the age of eight Southey declared that, “It is the easiest thing in the world to write a play,” and wrote one or more epic dramas, besides many fragments, before he was ten.

At eight Shelley wrote and illustrated some stanzas on a cat, and while at Lion House school, aged ten to twelve, he spent most of his time writing verses, drawing pictures or walking alone on the playground.

In his seventh year Macaulay wrote a compendium of universal history, giving a “tolerably connected view of the leading events from the creation to the present time.” Other writing followed rapidly, including parts of a poem in six cantos, in imitation of Scott, to be called *The Battle of Cheviot*. When he was twelve he published his *Epitaph on Henry Martyn*.

At nine Elizabeth Barrett composed an epic, at ten certain tragedies in French and English which were acted in the nursery, and soon after another epic in four cantos called *The Battle of Marathon*. Mr. Barrett’s vanity seems to have

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been touched by the last, for he had fifty copies printed, the volume being dedicated to him.

Before he could read Tennyson used to spread his arms to the wind and call, "I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind!" and the words, "Far, far away," charmed him from infancy. At five he had already written. When he was eight he did a lot of Thomsonian blank verse, and at ten many heroic couplets which he used to declaim to the skies. When he was twelve he wrote an epic in twelve books in the manner of Scott which he would "go shouting about the fields in the dark," and at fourteen he composed a drama in blank verse. His contributions to *Poems by Two Brothers* were written between fifteen and seventeen.

At eleven Francis Thompson determined secretly to be a poet and composed a love-poem to a little friend of his sister's. Although backward in the Latin versification required at school, he persisted in his resolve, and from sixteen was always writing verse secretly.

Riley wrote an amorous couplet on the fly-leaf of his first reader, as follows:

As sure as the vine doth the stump entwine  
Thou art the lump of my saccharine.

The ten poets just mentioned may be set up as precocious, in the following order: Trumbull, composing at four; Tennyson, at four or five, and prolific at eight; Southeby, probably at eight, and prolific before ten; Shelley, at eight; Elizabeth Barrett, at nine; Macaulay, probably around ten; Wordsworth and Chatterton, at ten, the latter probably much earlier; Scott and Thompson, at eleven; Riley at an age young enough to be using the first reader.

The poets who began writing verse at what seems a normal age, between the twelfth and sixteenth birthdays, included the following in about this order of precocity: Pope, who recorded that he "lisped in numbers," but of whose compositions there remains nothing earlier than the *Ode to Solitude*, composed at twelve; Byron and Swinburne, at twelve; Browning, who by some time in his thirteenth year had finished a volume of verse which he entitled *In-*

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*condita*; Poe, who like Pope was a great claimer of precocity but who is credited with nothing earlier than much of the material in his first volume which he probably composed during his thirteenth and fourteenth years; Cowley, who claimed to have written before thirteen, his claim being admitted by his contemporaries; Clare, at thirteen; Longfellow, who composed his first poem and saw it published at thirteen; Bryant, who at thirteen composed "a lengthy satire, not without political merit, calling upon President Thomas Jefferson to resign because he was incapable of managing the government"; Prior, who was discovered by Lord Dorset to be a competent versifier at thirteen or fourteen; Thomson, who had his mature style at fourteen and presumably composed much earlier; Tom Moore, who published a sonnet at fourteen, and Burns, who wrote his first love song at the same age; Campbell and Whittier, who began writing at fourteen or fifteen; Felicia Hemans, who published a volume at fifteen; Milton, who at fifteen versified *Psalms CIX* and *CXXXVI*; Coleridge, who was doing excellent imitative verse before he was sixteen; Hunt, whose father published his collected poems for him when he was sixteen.

From the evidence—or lack of it—the following seem to have been backward in showing their talents, in about the following reverse order: Patmore, who "went to Paris and began to write verses" at sixteen; Keats, the evidence being persuasive that his *Lines in Imitation of Spenser*, written at sixteen, were his first; Gray, the evidence being equally convincing that his translations of Statius, done at eighteen, represented his first versifying in English; Rossetti, in the *Blessed Damozel*, and other poems of his first volume, written at eighteen and nineteen; Cowper, doing patriotic ballads while a young lawyer in his early twenties; Whitman, beginning his early, derivative things at about the same age; Shakespeare, of whom there is no evidence of any poetic production before his late twenties; Fitzgerald, who seems to have led a wholly unproductive life until his forties.

But the inquiry into precocity in mere versifying is neither exact nor very significant. It is inexact because there are very

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few cases in which the surviving record of an apparent earliest production does not leave open the possibility, often—from the critical point of view—the probability, of an earlier production of which no record remains. And the inquiry is without significance because precocity in jingling is as likely to presage the newspaper rhymester or the bar-room ballad-monger as it is the poet. Far more interesting is a comparison of the ages at which the poets first produced important poetry in their mature style, and an alignment of them according to precocity, not in versifying, but in display of genius. Here we are dealing not only with certain dates, but with the proper quality of poetry.

In setting out the first important work of the poets there are, of course, possible differences of critical opinion. Without comparing the degrees of excellence of the poems of different poets, I have tried to select the earliest mature work of each according to his own final standard as set by the whole array of his work. For instance, Tennyson's volume of 1830, issued when he was twenty-one, containing *Claribel* and *Mariana*, and still more significantly his 1832 volume, when he was twenty-three, containing *CEnone*, *The Lotus-Eaters*, *The Lady of Shalott*, show unmistakably his verbal lyricism. But the real Tennyson, with a claim to greatness as a documenter of human experience, did not appear to the world until the 1842 volume, with *Locksley Hall*, *Ulysses*, and *The Two Voices*, poems all written in the late twenties or early thirties (I have disregarded *In Memoriam* because, although a few of the preserved stanzas were written at twenty-four or twenty-five, yet the poem as a whole had been so thoroughly revised before its publication in 1850 that it is impossible to date it). I have ascribed Campbell's emergence to *The Pleasures of Hope*, composed at twenty-one, while disregarding *Endymion*, composed by Keats at the same age, and a better poem than *The Pleasures of Hope*. The reason is that the latter shows the whole quality of Campbell, while *Endymion* is only an intimation of Keats. The other selections of first important poems are, I think, uncontroversial.

Chatterton is, without rival, the boy prodigy of English

literature. He wrote his mature and memorable *A Hymn* in his eleventh year, the Rowley poems between fourteen and sixteen, *The Ballad of Charity* at seventeen, and committed suicide the same year. The second place for precocity in genius is debatable between Bryant and Poe, and may be given a little grudgingly to the latter. He claimed to have written most of the poems in the 1831 volume (published when he was twenty-two) in his thirteenth and fourteenth years. Woodberry conceded the claim and Mr. Allen finds that when Poe was sixteen his foster-father was exhibiting in manuscript a completed volume. Bryant wrote *Thanatopsis* when he was seventeen, and left it in the family desk. Later his father found it, with other manuscripts of young William's, copied it, and submitted it, unsigned, to *The North American Review*. The editor accepted it along with *Entrance to a Wood*, and read both to Richard H. Dana. The latter's opinion was, "Phillips, you have been imposed upon; no one on this side of the Atlantic is capable of writing such verses." After their publication it was the consensus of critical opinion that the shorter poem might have been written by the son, but that *Thanatopsis* was surely the work of the father. Rossetti seems to have had no apprenticeship in literature, his earliest poems, written when he was eighteen and nineteen, containing *The Blessed Damozel* and others of his best. Donne wrote his *Satires* in his twenty-first and twenty-second years, Milton his *Hymn on the Nativity* and Campbell his *Pleasures of Hope*, each at twenty-one. Pope reached his mature style in the *Essay on Criticism*, written at twenty-one or twenty-two, Akenside his at about the same age, in *The Pleasures of Imagination*; and Marlowe helped found English blank verse with *Tamburlaine*, which had already been acted in public before he was twenty-three, and so was probably composed some time earlier.

Setting, for convenience, the limit of precocity at the twenty-third birthday, the following poets seem to have reached their mature stride at a normal or average age: Byron, with the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, written at twenty-two and twenty-three; Keats, with *The Eve of St. Agnes*, written early in his twenty-fourth year; Shelley, in *Alastor*, at twenty-

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ty-three; Coleridge, in the *Ancient Mariner*, at twenty-four; Thomson, in *Winter*, finished at twenty-four or twenty-five, though written in disconnected fragmentary form much earlier; Gray, in *An Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, at twenty-six; Wordsworth, in the *Lyrical Ballads*, at twenty-seven; and Spenser, in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, probably at the same age; Sidney, in *Astrophel and Stella*; Blair, in *The Grave*; and Blake, in *Songs of Innocence*, all in the late twenties; and Shakespeare, in the first historical plays, composed at some unascertained age before twenty-eight.

Again making an arbitrary division, the following poets seem to have been late in reaching maturity of style: Browning, in *Pippa Passes*, and Crabbe, in *The Village*, both written at twenty-nine; Falconer, in *The Shipwreck*, at thirty; Tennyson, in *Locksley Hall* and *Ulysses*, written at about thirty; Francis Thompson, in *Sister Songs*, at thirty or thirty-one; Whitman, in *Leaves of Grass*, begun at thirty and the first volume finished at thirty-five; Fitzgerald, in *The Rubaiyat*, begun in his late forties; Cowper, in *Table Talk, Conversation and Retirement*, begun at forty-nine and published at fifty.

Comparing the list showing precocity in versification with that showing precocity in genius, it is obvious that Chatterton stands well in the lead, and that Bryant and Poe divide second honors. One general conclusion would be, that the poets normally begin to versify between twelve and sixteen; another, that most of them have reached their maturity of style in their twenties; and a third, considering the great poets included in all of the categories, that "lisping in numbers" is no presage of genius and that generally, no case can be made out either for or against any kind of precocity as a promise of greatness.

Outside of their specialty of versification such intellectual precocity as the poets have shown seems to have been in the related subjects of language and literature:

Sidney spoke Latin and French at eleven.

Donne entered Oxford at eleven, and at twelve had "a good command both of the French and Latin tongue."

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Milton was precocious in learning "which I seized with such eagerness that from my twelfth year I scarce ever went to bed before midnight."

The future Doctor Watts began Latin at four, and Greek and Hebrew soon after.

Swift could spell and read the Bible at three.

It was Prior's precocity that gave him the necessary opening into the intellectual world. One evening when he was thirteen or fourteen Lord Dorset saw young Mat reading Horace at the bar of his uncle's fashionable wineshop and required him to translate what he was reading, which the boy did, metrically. Thereafter it was part of the evening's entertainment for the noble patrons to summon the bright lad to render Horace and Ovid into English verse.

At seven Trumbull had a sufficient mastery of Greek and Latin to pass the entrance examinations for Yale. On account of frail health his entrance was postponed until the "mature age" of thirteen, and he graduated at seventeen.

Little Chatterton was unique in the fashion of his precocity as in the fact of it. At five he could not yet read, and at six and a half his mother and sister concluded that he was "an absolute fool." But when he went to school at eight his mind leaped to its amazing maturity and he quickly "ran through three circulating Libraries."

Little Shenstone required any member of the family who went to market to bring him home a book, which he promptly took to bed with him. If no book was brought his mother pacified him by wrapping up a book-shaped piece of wood.

Coleridge's omnivorous curiosity for tales of travel and adventure, and his prodigious verbal memory, both appeared as soon as he could read. His strange learning, also his early ability to spell, became the wonder of the family, and he was petted and spoiled in consequence.

The tales of Macaulay's precocity are so numerous and well known that he stands as the type prodigy. From the time he was three he read incessantly, usually lying on the rug before the fire with a piece of bread and butter in his hand. And from the same age he was an enthusiastic *raconteur*, liking to take a walk with his nurse or mother, either making up tales

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out of his own fancy or exercising his enormous verbal memory. He was prodigious in vocabulary. At some time before the age of three he stood with his father at the nursery window and, seeing a cloud of black smoke pouring out of a tall chimney, inquired if that was hell. With his vocabulary appeared a ceremonious gravity. An old lady, calling at the Macaulays', was met at the front door by a blond boy of four who informed her that his parents were out but that if she "would be good enough to come in" he "would bring her a glass of old spirits." At about the same age he was taken out to call on Lady Waldegrave at Strawberry Hill where a servant spilled some hot coffee over his legs. After much compassion and attention on the part of the hostess, upon her asking him how he was feeling, he replied, "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated." A year or so later, having an early conception of legal right, he had a little plot of ground at the back of the house marked out as his own with a row of oyster shells, which the maid inadvertently threw away as rubbish. Young Tom went straight to the drawing room, where his mother was entertaining visitors, walked into the circle, and said very solemnly, "Cursed be Sally; for it is written, cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark." When cautioned by his mother that he must learn to study without the solace of bread and butter, he replied, "Yes, mama, industry shall be my bread and attention, my butter." His writing, at eight, a compendium of universal history has already been remarked. At the same age, records his mother, he wrote "a paper which Henry Daly was to translate into Malabar, to persuade the people of Travancore to embrace the Christian religion. On reading it, I found it to contain a very clear idea of the leading facts and doctrines of that religion, with some strong arguments for its adoption." At about eight, also, he got by heart, merely from several readings, all of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and most of *Marmion*.

By the age of nine Elizabeth Barrett, having devoured her father's library, was companioned by the Greek gods in her games. She cut a figure of Hector in the turf and filled out his features with flowers. At ten she had sufficient French to

write "tragedies" in that language. In her early 'teens, having then a private blind tutor, she read "all the Greek authors" and "all philosophy."

Longfellow at seven was halfway through the Latin grammar. He entered Bowdoin at fifteen and graduated at eighteen.

As soon as Browning's parents acquiesced in his inclination to be a man of letters, he sat down and mastered Johnson's dictionary from beginning to end.

At seven Francis Thompson was far gone in poetry, especially Coleridge and Shakespeare. He always read on the stairs "away from the constraint of chairs and tables and the unemotional flatness of the floor." On one occasion at school, after "lights," when talking was forbidden, he was detected reciting Latin verses in his sleep. After being awakened and cautioned he went back to sleep and broke into Greek verses.

As many of the poets have been infant prodigies in languages, so, whether at an early or normal age, they have often excelled at school and college in this branch of learning. Ben Jonson, Donne, Coleridge, Keats, Poe, Swinburne, Thompson, Stevenson, all took honors in languages at one time or another. But the poets have been one-sided in this respect, and have rarely been all-round good students. In other words they have tended to follow their own bent, which seemed to them important: if it brought them prizes, no matter; and if it brought them expulsion, no matter either. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Tennyson were indifferent students at university; Cowley, Goldsmith and Byron were worse than indifferent; Whitman's teacher predicted frankly that the boy would amount to nothing, as he had no regular habits of mind and no steadiness of purpose. All of which raises an old question, whether indeed there is any benefit to a poet in a conventional, systematized education.

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The Battle of the Books, between so-called academic and so-called professional writers, is always waging either in virulent or desultory fashion, sometimes flaring into acrimonious and sanguinary offensives, sometimes settling down into local raids and casual ranging. There are continuous desertions and redesertions, and split loyalties between the armies. But the two lines of trenches wind clearly drawn, and seldom broken for long, across the literary landscape, in a static warfare in which no permanent armistice is foreseeable. On one side the university men scorn the professionals for being ill-educated, disorganized hacks. And the professionals sneer back at their opponents for being smug and conventional pedants.

Whatever temporary conditions may sometimes be, or however frequently a college graduate may slip for his freedom into the ranks of the enemy, it is certain that a convincing majority of the poets have had at the outset what is called a "good education"—that is, a formal course of instruction culminating in at least three years at college—with or without degree—or the equivalent thereof in systematic, comprehensive private tutoring. There follow three types of education enjoyed by the poets: I—*Formal Education*, as just defined; II—*Partial or Specialized Education*, including two years or less of college, or partial or complete courses in miscellaneous special schools. Because of the lack of literary training those in this group stand often closer to the third class than to the first; III—*No Formal Education*—that is, no systematic instruction beyond the primary schools.

*I. Formal Education—*

Colleges and Universities:

Cambridge:

*A.B. degree*—Wyatt, Spenser, Greene, Marlowe, Nash, Carew, Herrick, Herbert, Shirley, Milton, Cleveland, Crashaw, Marvell, Cowley, Dryden, Lee, Prior, Pomet, Garth, Parnell, Fenton (qualified for degree but refused to take oaths required), Broome, Byrom,

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**Gray, Smart, Darwin, Wordsworth, Byron, Macaulay, Barnes (as a ten-year man graduating at forty-six), W. Johnson.**

*No degree*—Tennyson.

*Not certain whether degree taken*—Tusser, Donne, J. Fletcher, Quarles, Randolph, Suckling, Granville, A. Phillips, Lloyd, Milnes, Cambridge, Kingsley (also University of London), Myers.

**Fellowship**—Heywood, Cleveland, Cowley, Prior, Gray, Byrom, Smart, Macaulay, W. Johnson.

**M.A. degree**—Wyatt, Sackville, Greene, Marlowe, Herrick, Milton, Crashaw, Cowley, Garth, Parnell, Smart, Byron.

**Oxford:**

**A.B. degree**—Lodge, Wotton, Corbet, Cartwright, Sprat, Blackmore, Addison, J. Phillips, Young, Tickell, Collins, Gifford, Keble, Beddoes, Doyle, Dixon, Arnold, T. E. Brown, De Tabley, Symonds.

*No degree*—Sidney (three years), Daniel (three years), Donne (transferred to Cambridge before taking A.B. but M.A. from Oxford later), Messinger, Davenant, Denham (three years), Otway, Walsh, Shenstone (though remained ten years), Southee (three years), Swinburne (three years), Dowson.

*Not certain whether degree taken*—Chapman, Drayton, Wither, Carew, King, Shirley, Lovelace, E. Smith, Rochester, Yalden, Somerville, Lyttleton, West, Bowles, Morris, L. Johnson.

**Fellowship**—Addison, Tickell, Keble, Doyle, Arnold, T. E. Brown.

**M.A. degree**—Lodge, Wotton, Donne, Cartwright, Rochester, Swift, Addison, Tickell.

**Kings College, London:**

*Not certain whether degree taken*—Kingsley (also Cambridge).

**University of Edinburgh:**

**A.B. degree**—Leyden.

*Not certain whether degree taken*—Macpherson, Bruce, Scott, Hake (also Glasgow), J. Stevenson, Davidson.

**M.A. degree**—Drummond.

*Advanced university work but no evidence of degree*—Goldsmith.

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University of Glasgow:

*Not certain whether degree taken*—Smollett, Campbell, Hake (also Edinburgh), D. Gray.

St. Andrews University:

*A.B. degree*—Dunbar.

*Not certain whether degree taken*—Douglas, Lyndsay, Fergusson.

*M.A. degree*—Dunbar.

University of Aberdeen:

*Not certain whether degree taken*—Beattie, Macpherson.

University of Dublin:

*A.B. degree*—Swift (by special favor, a term of reproach), Goldsmith, Moore.

*Not certain whether degree taken*—de Vere.

Harvard University:

*A.B. degree*—Dana, Holmes, Emerson, Very, Lowell, Moody.

Yale University:

*A.B. degree*—Trumbull.

Princeton University:

*A.B. degree*—Freneau.

Bowdoin College:

*A.B. degree*—Longfellow.

Oglethorpe College:

*A.B. degree*—Lanier.

University of Paris:

*No degree*—Douglas.

Religious colleges:

Dunbar (order of Observantine Franciscans), Southwell (English college at Douay, Flanders, and at Rome—Jesuit), Habington (St. Omers, but refused to be a priest), F. Thompson (Ushaw—but failed to qualify for priesthood).

Professional or other special studies subsequent to university education—

*Divinity*—Douglas (orders), Donne (orders), Corbet (orders), Herrick (orders), Herbert (orders), Shirley, Cartwright (orders), Sprat (orders), Pomfret (orders), Parnell (orders), Young (orders), Leyden (orders), Bowles (orders), Keble, Barnes (orders), Emerson (D.D.), Kingsley, Dixon (honorary D.D.).

*Law*—Lodge (Lincoln's Inn), Donne (Lincoln's Inn), Drummond, Wither, Suckling (Gray's Inn), Denham (Lincoln's

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Inn—did not practice), Young (Bachelor of Civil Law), Scott (called to Bar and practiced), Campbell (lectures in law), Moore (did not practice), Dana (Cambridge, Lincoln's Inn), Macaulay (called to the Bar), Holmes (did not practice), Lowell (called to the Bar but did not practice).

*Medicine*—Blackmore (graduated at Padua), Garth (M.D.), Byrom (studied in France), Goldsmith (Edinburgh and Leyden—did not practice), Darwin (Edinburgh), Beddoes (at Göttingen, Würzburg, and Zürich), Holmes (M.D. and practiced), Hake, Thompson (no degree).

*Miscellaneous*—James I (Jurisprudence), Longfellow (linguistic studies abroad).

### Private Tutoring—

James I, Milton (besides school and university), Elizabeth Barrett, Rogers, Browning, Patmore.

The above shows that 128 of the poets have enjoyed three years or more of college work and 5 others the equivalent in private tutoring.

### *II. Partial or Specialized Formal Education (no more than two years' University Education)—*

#### Secondary Schools:

Westminster—B. Jonson (no further education), Rowe, Dyer, Hammond (no further education), Churchill (thereafter studied privately with father, till ordained), Cowper (seven years).

Rugby—Landor.

Eton—Waller, Shelley (Sion house before that).

Harrow—Sotheby (thence to Army), Cornwall.

Christ's Hospital—Coleridge, Lamb (disqualified for orders and so for university scholarship by impediment in speech), Hunt (also disqualified for university because he stammered).

Enfield School—Keats (then apprenticed to surgeon).

*Miscellaneous schools*—Butler (King's School, Worcester), Congreve (Wilkenney), Gay (good teacher in Mr. Luck), Chatterton (Colston's Blue-Coat School in Bristol from eight to fourteen), Montgomery (Moravian School but declined to be a priest), Whittier (at nineteen attended Haverhill Academy for two terms, "paying for the tuition with his savings—earned by making slippers during the winter" at eight cents a

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pair), Poe (private schools in Richmond and England), Emily Brontë (Mme. Heger's pension in Brussels for one year), Meredith (Moravian School), Emily Dickinson (Amherst Academy and South Hadley Female Seminary—later a training school for foreign missionaries), Henley (Crypt School under T. E. Brown—further formal education interrupted by illness and educated himself in a hospital).

### Colleges and Universities—

Cambridge—Gascoigne, Waller (to Parliament at seventeen), Pattison (left in a huff), Coleridge (two years—left voluntarily).

Oxford—Raleigh (one year), Beaumont (for a year or two), S. Johnson (fourteen months, then forced to leave because of poverty), Landor (suspended for firing a gun through a Tory's door and refused to return), Shelley (expelled during freshman year for liberalism), Gordon.

University of Edinburgh—Thomson (two years, then to London to make his literary fortune), Mallet, Aken-side (sent by subscription of dissenters, with intention that he become a minister, changed his mind, returned the money, and studied medicine).

University of Dublin—Congreve.

University of Virginia—Poe (expelled after one term for profligacy).

West Point Military Academy—Poe (expelled after a few months for insubordination).

Williams College—Bryant (left after two years because of poverty).

Miscellaneous private, non-professional education—Chaucer, Butler (free use of library of the Countess of Kent, where also secretary and amanuensis of Selden), Duchess of Newcastle, Sheffield (didn't like his tutor, resolved at twelve to educate himself systematically and succeeded), Pope (educated partly by the family priest, partly at a Catholic seminary where he lampooned the teacher, was whipped and left, partly at a small school in London where he learned nothing, and after twelve by self-education at home), Tennant (gave himself an education, including Hebrew, while working as a clerk to a merchant), Watts (educated by a minister).

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Professional or other special studies without previous University Education—

*Divinity*—Langland (minor orders), Churchill (orders), Crabbe (ordained).

*Law*—Chaucer, Gascoigne (did not practice), Beaumont, Ford (practiced), Vaughan, Congreve, Rowe, Dyer, Cowper (called to the Bar and practiced a short time), Chatterton (apprenticed to an attorney at fourteen, did not practice), Bryant (admitted to Bar and practiced), Meredith (did not practice).

*Medicine*—Akenside (M.D., Leyden), Crabbe (articled as surgeon and practiced a short time), Keats (complete course in surgery and received certificate), Chivers (M.D., practiced little or none).

*Miscellaneous*—Dyer (after trying law studied painting), Sotheby (at seventeen entered the army), Hood (educated for the counting house, under a city merchant), Gordon (studied for commission at Woolwich but failed to obtain it), the nineteenth-century James Thomson (studied to become an army school-master).

Total, 51 who had a partial or specialized education.

### III. *No Known Formal Education (beyond primary schools)*—

Cædmon (illiterate), Shakespeare, Taylor, Savage, Blake (apprenticed to an engraver at fourteen), Cunningham, Burns, Bloomfield, Hogg, Ramsay (parish school), E. Elliot, Woodworth, R. H. Wilde, Clare (paid for elementary schooling one month at a time, with money saved from extra work as ploughboy—a “benevolent exciseman” educated him in writing and arithmetic), Simms (mother being dead and father gone “West to fight Indians,” was left to the care of his grandmother who “did not approve of literature,” and “it is related that the child had to do his reading by stealth, with a stolen candle, and his head and light inside a box”), Frances Brown (blind Irish poet), George Eliot (voluminous reader as a child), Whitman (quit school at twelve and entered a Brooklyn printing office), Rossetti (cultivated home but no formal education—When Rossetti was twenty he wrote Ford Madox Brown an adulatory letter, desiring to be his pupil. Brown, a formidable-looking man, marched to the Rossettis’ house with a stick and demanded to know what he meant. They became friends).

Total, 19 who had no education beyond primary school.

The education of Burns is worth special notice. When he

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was a small boy a widowed cousin of his mother entertained him with what he afterward called the largest collection in Scotland of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkeys, kelpies, elf-candles, dead lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, enchanted towers, giants, dragons, and "other trumpery." When he was thirteen or fourteen his father, not being able either to pay for educating two boys or to spare both brothers at once from the farm, sent Robert and Gilbert on alternate weeks to the parish school at Dalrymple, two or three miles from Mount Oliphant, where they lived. Here he learned to write, was "grounded in a little English," and had "a fortnight's French," for which he showed aptitude. When he was fifteen, in order to take advantage of Mr. Murdoch's offer of free instruction in Ayr, he was released from the farm for three weeks. He shared the master's bed, and much of his instruction was received there, as well as on the street to and from school. Somewhat later he had a "summer quarter at land surveying." Meanwhile Robert devoured such incidental reading as he could get, including *The Spectator*, Pope, Ramsay, and a collection of English songs; and much later, Thomson, Shenstone, Sterne and Mackenzie. Once when he was fourteen, Mr. Burns ordered from Ayr the *Complete Letter Writer*, and got, instead, a collection of *Letters by the Most Eminent Writers* (of the reign of Queen Anne) together with a few *Sensible Directions for Attaining an Easy Epistolary Style*. Robert took energetic advantage of these "sensible directions" and, having no correspondents, invented several of culture, and spent his evenings favoring them with epistles of compliment, condolence, and acknowledgement of congratulations. Burns *père* encouraged the boys in every way within his means, and at table each male member of the family sat silent over his bowl of porridge or broth, a spoon in one hand, a book in the other.

Returning now to our three classifications, and combining the last two, we find that as against 133 poets who had a reasonably complete academic education, there have been 70 who had either no formal education beyond primary school, or professional school of some kind, or at most two years of

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college. Recalling our list of twenty great poets named on page 11, we find the evidence, from the point of view of quality, to resolve as follows:

In favor of formal education: Spenser, Marlowe, Donne, Milton, Dryden, Gray, Wordsworth, Byron, Emerson, Tennyson, Browning, Thompson—12.

Against formal education: Shelley, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Pope, Coleridge, Keats, Burns, Whitman—8.

The vote stands twelve to eight, and the inference is that the Battle of the Books will continue. Or possibly the better inference is that it isn't worth waging, that the formal education neither makes nor destroys a poet, the only real necessity being that he have leisure to write.

With this stark record of the education of poets, the facts and anecdotes respecting their "Origins" are ended. Indeed the college period brings them so close to their maturity that I have postponed most of the anecdotes of this period for inclusion in the later sections which deal with the poets as grown persons actively practicing their calling.



*PART II*

THE POET AND PEOPLE



## *LOOKS AND MANNERS*

The physical appearance of the poets is conditioned, as in other men, by their state of health and habits of exercise. Though their variation in these respects is extreme, yet, like other sedentary workers, they probably lean a little toward the flabby and pale. When we look for any quality of feature or bearing common to the poets, we are on still more conjectural ground. There is the "writer's stoop" which is inferable through the usual glowing descriptions of the poets—the setting forward of the shoulders with a compensating exaggeration outward of the curve of the upper back into a little hump, and a tendency at the cranial end of the spine to let the head slump forward into an attitude faintly reminiscent of Neanderthal Man. Of the poets mentioned in the following pages there seems to have been a suggestion of this in the figures of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Emerson, Francis Thompson, and no doubt many others. I dare not say that this curvature—supposedly the result of long bending over a desk—is typical of poets; but I can say I have remarked it in several of my poetical contemporaries. Then there is the business of the eyes. From the time that "sensibility" began to tint literature, early in the eighteenth century, until sentimentality ceased to daub it, only the other day, there have always been the eyes of the poets, "wildly rolling," or "piercing as the eagle's" or "fixed on a far light not of land or sea," or the like. Now, most unfortunately for my profession of candor in these notes, I do think there is some truth behind all these hyperboles. Whether it is due to a chronic enlargement of the organ, which I doubt; or to some enlargement or unusual elasticity of the pupil—a matter on which I am incapable of an opinion; or whether —what I do believe—the eye is physically normal but there is, on the part of the poets, a peculiar way of using it, abetted

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with appropriate play of the other facial muscles; whatever be the physiological basis of the impression or the illusion, and however much the tradition of it may be exploited by the many poets who have a histrionic talent, nevertheless there seems typically to be a unique quality in the poet's expression which is most easily described in terms of the eyes. There is something of the baffling and humiliating candor of a baby's stare, or something of the desperately honest inquiry, the long, long looks of adolescence, an expression at once a little frightened and deprecating in the midst of the irrelevancies of the world and at the same time fixing for its own safety upon some truth beyond those irrelevancies. It is the look of that person I tried to describe in the foreword, that type poet who is never going to forego the search for truth, who cannot, in fact, for his own integrity, forego it. In the young poet the look is the consecration of the enthusiast; a little later it becomes astonishment and despair; presently—during the dark night of the poet's soul—it may take on a corrosive sneer, in proportion as his egotism builds for its defence an armor of ordinary, pompous vanity; and if the poet wins through this ordeal, the glance emerges in maturity steady, enlightened, comprehending, but still young and direct in its honesty, an "inspiration" to romanticists, and the scorn of half-sophisticated cynics. Despite the fol-de-rol of sentimental biographers, there must be some truth beneath the almost universal testimony. There is, I think, something about the eyes.

In the matter of dress we are on surer ground. Every poet is secretly convinced that he is a special person in the world, and that in consequence it is not for him to go along with the herd and its conventional ways. In its more significant expressions this sense of individuality takes the form of rebellion against this or that basic canon of the social code. More superficially, it may show itself in dress. By the very individualistic nature of the poet, there is no sartorial rule for him. There have been many who have dressed decorously and neatly, in the mode of any bank clerk. But in most cases there is a variation from the norm in one of two directions. While the egotism of the poet remains

healthy and self-sufficient there is an indifference to dress, expressing itself in a negligent conventionality, sometimes in a more startling negligée, to the point of shabbiness and nakedness; but when the healthy egotism has been metamorphosed by the poison of disillusion into ordinary worldly vanity, then you get bizarrie of dress and the loud demand upon the attention of the world. This bizarrie may take the form of an excessive dandyism; or of some unique and unmodish plumage which the poet devises for himself; or it may simply adopt some current conventional habit of poets generally—as the long hair, the flowing tie, etc.—which, since the poet is a rare bird in any flock, is sufficient to mark him unconventional to the generality and cause people to point as he passes, and to inquire, perhaps openly to laugh, and—this is his hope, often justified—to pause and wonder and furtively to admire. In observing the poet look always for the ego. See it near pure when he is an honest sloven, who truly forgets all this—but even here suspect the apostasy into vanity, the affectation of negligence, and watch momently for the signal to be shocked. See the sacred ego purest perhaps in the minority who stick close to the sartorial norm, according to their means, scorning the extremities of their colleagues who have descended to display—but even here, still suspect the consciousness of self and the assumption of magnificent simplicity. Watch for the ego. Among the few great ones you will rarely find it speaking in terms as superficial as dress—and yet again, you may.

In the present section, beside appearance and dress, I shall mention also such idiosyncrasies of manner, voice and conversation as bear upon social or superficial appearance. And in these also, it is desirable to watch always for the self-conscious eye.

From the portraits we can imply that Chaucer was above the vanities I have mentioned—the conventional tunic appropriate to his station, the downcast, serious, slightly harassed look, and the scraggly beard. Surely no beauty. By his own confession a “large,” i.e. somewhat corpulent man, no ‘puppet’ to embrace, that is not slender in the waist; . . . having an ‘elvish’ or abstracted look, often staring on the

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ground 'as if he would find a hare,' and 'doing no dalliance' to any man, i.e. not entering briskly into casual conversation." His vocal reticence, or ineptitude, is evidenced by the report that the Countess of Pembroke once told him that his silence was more agreeable than his conversation—a thoroughly credible anecdote in connection with others to like effect that several of the greatest poets have been shy, or otherwise helpless, in common discourse.

Langland wore the clerical tonsure and was so tall that he was nicknamed "Long Will."

Gower, of whom a full-length figure is preserved, seems to have been a slender and somewhat chinless individual, habited and tonsured in elegance appropriate to the fourteenth-century gentry to which he belonged.

Shirley had a big mole on his left cheek, on account of which Archbishop Laud refused to ordain him.

Aubrey said that Sidney was "extremely beautiful. He much resembled his sister. . . . His hair . . . 'tis not masculine enough; yet he was a person of great courage." Elsewhere we are told, somewhat anticlimactically, that he "had pimples."

Greene's ruffled hair and "long red beard became a beacon and a terror to all good citizens."

In appearance Ben Jonson was even less savory than Greene—a "mountain body with a racky face." His enormous head seemed to sit directly on his huge shoulders with only rolls of fat between. Throughout his life he grew steadily fatter, until in age he was almost immobilized. His features were irregular, one eye being higher than the other, and his face knotted with warts. From the time he went to war, when he was nineteen, he never shaved; and besides the famous mop of blazing red hair he grew matted, equally red, side-whiskers, his chin remaining beardless. Within this frame of fire his complexion was pallid except when in anger it turned a dark red and his body seemed to swell toward apoplexy. Always boastful and endowed with a heavy talent for billingsgate, he was intensely touchy and vain of his person. In his affluence under the patronage of James he dressed ponderously in silks, laces, and miscellaneous gold chains, medals,

belts and other hardware. But in his greatest splendor his fat, creased hands and welted face were always filthy.

Aubrey says Shakespeare was "a handsome, well-shap't man." Otherwise we have the folio engraving for contemporary likeness—a man sensitively cut both in form and feature, with a head too big for the body but of a delicate and fragile bone-structure, and large, direct eyes. In 1597 Lord Hundiden, Elizabeth's Chamberlain and patron of Shakespeare's company, was elected to the order of the garter. The Lord Chamberlain's Men formed part of the magnificent suite of 300 that accompanied him to Windsor for the Installation. For a moment we see them, splendidly mounted, cantering through the village street of Windsor, "in blue coats faced with orange-coloured taffeta, and orange-coloured feathers in their hats, most part having chains of gold. . . ." Here for an instant the living figure of Shakespeare gallops recognizably out of the mist, crosses our vision, and returns again into obscurity. And twenty years later the Stratford bust shows the slight figure fattened and the features thickened in the direction of smugness, the smugness perhaps of the poor local boy who had seen the whole world and returned to the hard-earned status of small-town magnate.

Beaumont and Fletcher were both tall, very handsome men.

The portrait of Donne at eighteen shows a strong slim face with large eyes, high cheek-bones, and set, thin lips, the whole full of vitality and imprinted with the sneer of condescending intelligence in the lines about the base of the heavy, coarse nose. In maturity he wore a pointed mustache and a pointed beard, and as he grew older, especially after his conversion, his features thinned toward an almost ascetic delicacy. His private conversation was animated and scintillating, and he fled bores rudely. As a preacher he set a pattern of grace in gesture which became the style in the next generation. Both at court and in his own pulpit, he was the most famous and fashionable orator in England. The record comes down to us of his melodious, rhapsodic, half-extemporized delivery, rising and falling between wit

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and tears like a storm, holding his congregation tranced by the theatrical display, while the rival theologians, scattered through the audience, hating him, hummed in mockery.

Lovelace is recorded as "the most amiable and beautiful person that eye ever beheld, a person also of innate modesty, virtue, and courtly deportment, . . . much admired and adored by the female sex." Later, after he had lost his fortune in the royal cause, we see him again "very poor in body and in purse, . . . the object of charity, . . . in ragged clothes, . . . lodged in obscure and dirty places."

Milton was short in stature and was known at Cambridge as the "Lady of Christ's," not from any effeminacy of manner but because of the delicate beauty of his long calm face in its frame of light brown hair, parted in the middle and flowing in waves down to the shoulders. In the period of the epics—his late fifties and early sixties—the picture of the then blind poet shows him "dressed neatly in black; pale but not cadaverous, his hands and fingers gouty and with chalk stones"; and on fair days we see him sitting in the sun at the door of his house, dressed "in a gray, coarse cloth coat," and receiving his visitors.

Marvell was "of middling stature, . . . strong-set, round-faced, cherry-cheeked, hazel-eyed, brown-haired, . . . in conversation . . . modest and of very few words." Marvell's taciturnity seems, however, to have been cautious, deliberate and worldly, in contrast to the shyness of some of the other poets. Bishop Parker said that he rarely opened his mouth in Parliament because "that our poet could not speak without a sound basting: whereupon having frequently undergone this discipline, he learnt at length to hold his tongue."

Dryden, with the general aspect of a tradesman rather than of a poet, was notoriously bashful, dull, humorless and usually silent in general conversation. It was only in private, with one or two intimate friends, that his talk flowed with something like the ease of his pen.

The Duchess of Newcastle was an original in all things, including dress. "I took great delight in attiring myself in fine dressings and fashions, especially such fashions as I did invent myself." Pepys recorded of her: "Met my Lady

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Newcastle going with her coaches and footmen, all in velvet; herself with her velvet cap, her hair about her ears, many black patches about her mouth, without anything about her neck, and a black vest fitted to the body." Later Pepys "saw her in her coach with a hundred boys and girls running behind."

Edmund Smith, natively handsome, but equally slovenly in morals and in person, was known to his friends as "Captain Rag" or "Rag" for his negligence in dress. But his filthiness was offset by the charm of his talk. Oldsworth records of him that he was "a master . . . of the Ciceronian eloquence, mixed with the conciseness and force of Demosthenes, the elegant and moving turns of Pliny, and the acute and wise reflections of Tacitus." Beside this somewhat depressing encomium there stands the more sprightly fact that the best wits—including the penurious Addison—actually supported this odd tramp in London for the benefit of his conversation.

Swift had a "muddy complexion which, though he washed himself with oriental scrupulosity, did not look clean." His countenance was "sad and severe, which he seldom softened by any appearance of gaiety." His voice was sharp, inharmonious and high-toned; his manner arrogant, magisterial and dictatorial rather than persuasive. He insisted on dominating every conversation and resented any retorts to his sarcasms except when he occasionally paused deliberately for reply.

Pope was a "crazy" crooked little "carcass," something under five feet tall, so tiny that his seat had to be raised to bring him up to the level of common tables. His legs were so thin that he wore extra stockings to pad them, and in his later years he was contracted and twisted with pain. He described himself in the person of Dick Distich as "a lively little creature, with long legs and arms; a spider is no ill emblem of him; he has been taken at a distance for a small windmill." His features, drawn with habitual pain, were brightened by the vivid and penetrating eyes. He was pompous withal, dressed elegantly, and swaggered a little sword he had specially made to suit his stature. His voice was

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pleasing in quality and he had a talent for anecdote. Yet he was so self-conscious in public that he seldom spoke unless he had something to say worthy of the great Pope—and even then he usually saved it for a couplet. Swift called him a silent, inattentive companion, and once he went to sleep at his own table when the Prince of Wales was talking poetry to him. Stephen remarks “how often the encounter of brilliant wits tends to neutralize rather than stimulate their activity”; and he pictures the dinner at Twickenham, on July 6, 1726, “when the party was made up of Pope, the most finished poet of the day; Swift, the deepest humorist; Bolingbroke, the most brilliant politician; Congreve, the wittiest writer of comedy; and Gay, the author of burlesque. . . . Pope very likely went to sleep, . . . Swift was deaf and overbearing, . . . Congreve and Bolingbroke were painfully witty, and Gay frightened into silence.”

Addison was another of the famous “wits” of the early eighteenth century who was notoriously deficient in conversation, his friends attributing his helplessness to “bashfulness, which is a cloak that . . . muffles merit,” and Chesterfield recording flatly that he was “the most timorous and awkward man” he ever saw. Addison himself said that, with respect to intellectual wealth, “he could draw bills for a thousand pounds, though he had not a guinea in his pocket.” In dress he was conventional.

Prior was a spare, wooden-faced man, was deaf and had a chronic cough.

Gay was tall, fat, flabby and flashily dressed.

Savage, according to Johnson, was of middle stature, thin, long-faced, “coarse features and melancholy aspect; of a grave and manly deportment, a solemn dignity of mien; but which . . . softened into engaging easiness of manners. His walk was slow, and his voice tremulous and mournful. He was easily excited to smiles, but very seldom provoked to laughter.” Whatever funds he might collect for his physical sustenance he squandered on elegancies of his dress. He charmed every one by his conversation and supported himself by it.

Thomson was moderately tall and “‘more fat than bard

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beseems,' of a dull countenance, and a gross, unanimated, uninviting appearance; silent in mingled company, but cheerful among select friends." He was an atrocious reader, especially of anything "lofty": once when he was reading a manuscript to Tonson, the publisher snatched the verses, declaring that he didn't understand his own poetry.

Doctor Wilkie was an eccentric who by day loaded himself with clothes, and at night "used to lie in bed with two dozen pair of blankets over him." The farmers near Edinburgh being infested with wood-pigeons, "Wilkie's father planted him often as a scarecrow . . . in the midst of his fields of wheat, whither the poet would carry out his Homer, a table, . . . pen and ink, and a great rusty gun."

Gray was short, slender in early life—too fat later—proud, self-conscious, defensively chilly in manner though really affectionate, affected when uncomfortable, fastidious and finicky sometimes to the point of effeminacy, and he walked with a gingerly, wavering gait. As a youth with Walpole in Paris, he was "quite a little fop" in dress and gay behavior. Slowly through life he steadied into demurely dressed melancholy, but his eyes remained always of "lightening brightness."

Shenstone was tall, clumsy, negligent of clothes and fashion, and had an original and striking manner of wearing his gray hair.

Akenside, the son of a butcher, was lame from the fall of his father's cleaver on his foot. His sententious manner and solemn eloquence exposed him to ridicule, notably in the figure of the doctor in *Peregrine Pickle*.

When Churchill quit preaching for licentiousness he blossomed into extravagant dress—a blue coat, gold-laced hat and enormous ruffles. The Dean of Westminster and his parishioners protested and he ridiculed them. Hogarth caricatured him as a bear dressed canonically, with ruffles at his paws and holding a pot of porter.

Crabbe at the outset was a crude and unsophisticated bumpkin. But he grew to be a kindly and courteous old man, albeit a dry preacher who spoke through his nose and hated "enthusiasm."

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Burns was a powerful, well-proportioned man of medium size, one of the strongest men in his parish, with a short neck and a touch of the ploughman's stoop. Scott records of him that "his manner" was "rustic . . . ; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity." This "plainness and simplicity," however, seems to have been reserved for such formal occasions as those on which Scott met him, for in his home town he was distinguished for the dashing and unique way in which he folded his specially gay plaid—"reddish yellow like an autumn leaf"—and for being the only young man in the place to tie his hair. His countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits, "the expression melancholy in repose but brightening up with affection at the approach of any one he knew. There was a strong expression of strength and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone . . . indicated the poetical character. . . . It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally, glowed) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head. . . ." Whether as a part of his rustic manner or his poetic detachment, Burns was "the kind of man who is always knocking up against things, falling, cutting or bruising fingers, losing his possessions or forgetting them." Although of a "dignified simplicity" when out in society, he was, on his home heath, a great talker before the Lord, with a spell to him that held his audience. When "Rab from Lochlie" started to discourse the village girls crowded round to listen and laugh and watch his face. One day old Candlish, the smithy, held his hammer in the air till the iron cooled, lest he lose a word of "Robin's rant." And on Sunday morning, between services, he would deliver witty anti-Calvinist disputation in the churchyard, with special eloquence reserved for excoriating the doctrine of original sin.

Blake had a snub nose and bulging forehead and eyes. As a young man in the salons of the blue-stockings he used to sing his youthful poems, while sedulous musicians set down the tunes.

Rogers was "an ugly little man, a wrinkled Mæcenas, in a brown coat."

Wordsworth's face gave either of two impressions and both seem to have been just. There was the drooping-weight-of-thought impression expressed in Haydon's head of him in the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, described by DeQuincey as "certainly the noblest for intellectual effects that . . . I have seen"—the long face, the brow not high but broad, the nose large and arched, the mouth strong and prominent, the eyes remarkable for a solemn, calm inclusiveness of gaze. And these same features fit equally Carlyle's description of him as "a cold, hard, silent, practical man," with his "stern, blue eyes, superior to men and circumstances," and his "immense head and great jaws like a crocodile, cast in a mould designed for prodigious work." Add to this Hazlitt's record of "the convulsive inclination to laughter about" the corners of "the mouth," and you have perhaps a complete impression of the human being rigidly repressed within the intellectual frame. And for caricature we have Hazlitt's later description to Landor, who had never seen Wordsworth: "But you have seen a horse, I suppose? . . . Well, sir, if you have seen a horse, I mean his head, sir, you may say you have seen Wordsworth, sir." In figure he was tall, gaunt and rangy, with shoulders narrow and drooping, and with a sort of twisted lounge in his gait. Altogether he resembled a "mountain farmer more than a lake poet," his manner unrefined, unprepossessing and without any touch of affectation. It is not surprising that Dorothy records, when they were travelling through Scotland with Scott, then Sheriff of Selkirk, and stopped for the night at the Inn at Melrose, "I could not persuade the woman to show me the beds, or to make any sort of provision till she was assured from the Sheriff himself that he had no objection to sleep in the same room with William." As a young man he wore his hair straight and unpowdered, like a Jacobin, and dressed, of course, in a rustic—and impoverished—simplicity. His talk was natural and "gushing," with "a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*," and, when he read, "a chaunt . . . which acts as a spell on the hearer and disarms the judgment." Elizabeth Barrett wrote that "in his slow even articulation

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there is the solemnity and calmness of truth itself, rather than the animation and energy of those who seek for it." He always looked twenty years older than his age, and at fifty he was an old man. When he was sixty-one, Henry Taylor wrote of him, "It was a hardy weather-beaten old face, which might have belonged to a nobleman, a yeoman, a mariner, or a philosopher; . . . a rough gray face, full of rifts and clefts and fissures, and of which, some one said, you might expect lichens to grow on it." And two years later Emerson found him "a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, who laid down the law on the subject of America, of which he knew little, and talked instead of listening," and who recited his poems to the visitor which Emerson found "so unlooked for and surprising—he, the old Wordsworth, standing apart and reciting to me in a garden walk, like a schoolboy declaiming. . . ."

Scott, like Wordsworth, was a little on the rustic. But his manner was lively and cordial, and his conversation rich with anecdote and averse to disquisition.

Southee as a youth was "tall, self-possessed, . . . with a shrewd face, black bushy hair, lips . . . full . . . but decisive in their lines, . . . eyes . . . piercing, . . . nose high and prominent."

Coleridge's eyes were large and gray, "softly luminous." In his features "there were no strong lines. His face like his character was fundamentally formless." His complexion was "clear, even bright. His forehead . . . broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and eyes rolling beneath them. . . . His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humored and round; but his nose . . . the index of his will, was small, feeble, nothing. . . . His person was . . . above the common size, inclined to be corpulent. . . . His hair . . . black and glossy as a raven's . . . fell in smooth masses over his forehead." At fifty-eight we have this picture of him, crossing the Channel with Wordsworth: ". . . a full and lazy appearance, . . . dressed in black, . . . short breeches buttoned and tied at the knees, and black silk stockings, . . . giving the idea of . . . an itinerant preacher. His face . . . extremely hand-

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some, its expression placid and benevolent. . . . His hair, of which he had plenty"—parted in the middle—"was entirely white. His forehead and cheeks . . . unfurrowed, and the latter showed a healthy bloom. . . ." Not long after this began the fatty decay; enormous obesity, shuffling on thin limbs, the head drooping forward, with running nose and watery mouth, dressed in a neat black suit, and his cravat always stained with snuff. Coleridge's forte was his eloquence. After he left Cambridge and had spent long hours talking with Lamb in *The Salutation and Cat*, his monotone became so much a part of the place that "the innkeeper . . . offered him free quarters if he would become a permanent entertainer." His talk, whether in private, on the lecture platform, or in the pulpit, was a ceaseless flow which would have been boring if it had not been brilliant, for it took no thought of the hearers, being only an involuntary method of discharging his enormous verbal memory. One day Lamb, on the way to work at East India House, encountered Coleridge on the street. Coleridge turned on his usual monotone of eloquence, one hand seizing Lamb by a button to hold his attention, while the other gestured impressively and the great head rolled back, the glazed eyes fixed on heaven. Presently Lamb realized he was going to be late for work, took out his pocket knife, cut off the button that bound them together, and proceeded to his office. Several hours later he passed that way again: there stood Coleridge, still holding tightly to the button, still gesturing with the other hand, his interminable eloquence still rising obliviously to the sky, or falling by chance on the ears of a few passers-by who stood at a little distance listening uneasily to this strange and melodious flow. Coleridge's lectures, between the ages of forty and forty-six, became a vogue in London, though he never prepared them and seldom stuck to his subject.

Landor was a "leonine" man, with a fierceness of address suited to his name, a figure robust and commanding but not tall, a florid complexion, "bold, full, blue-gray eyes, . . . strong, high-arched brows, . . . dark hair falling over the forehead, . . . long, stubborn upper lip, and an aggressive set of the jaw." In middle age his forehead was bald, with

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the white hair brushed back from it, emphasizing the fine classical head. He was normally a charming and courteous conversationalist, but always in danger of flaring one way into loud fury, or the other way into equally loud laughter.

Tom Moore was a diminutive dandy who, in spite of the flattery lavished on him, remained an unaffected, modest and lovable little man. He had a sweet voice and habitually sang his poems at great houses—by way of increasing their sale.

In feature Byron was of incomparable beauty, at once fierce, sensual and delicate—chestnut hair, large blue-gray eyes—“one . . . visibly larger than the other”—fine straight nose, lips a little too full, finely modelled throat and chin, the latter dimpled, a tinted fairness of complexion like alabaster lighted from within, and always in evidence the slim white hands that were his special pride. His blemish, besides his lameness, was a tendency to fatness, to overcome which he starved himself for years. He was only a little over five feet seven inches tall and when he was nineteen he weighed 195 pounds. The weight was all in his torso, his shoulders being broad and powerful, and the legs always spindly and undeveloped. In his last years his face was swollen with fat to the point of disfigurement. Always touchy about his club foot he adopted numerous dodges to hide it. He would “enter a room quickly, running rather than walking, and stop himself by putting the sound foot on the ground and resting on it. On the rare occasions when he was seen walking on the street . . . he moved with a peculiar sliding gait . . . the gait of a person walking on the balls and toes of his feet, and doing his best to hide this . . . mode of progress.” He was in every way self-conscious and haughty, often sitting at dinner, according to Mme. de Staël, with his eyes shut or half-shut. About the quality of his voice there is some difference of opinion. There are effusions about his wide range, his rich diapason and the perfect histrionics of his delivery, and certain children referred to him as “the man who speaks like music.” On the other hand, he spoke with the “Harrow sing-song,” and his friend Tom Moore was decisive in his opinion that he murdered poetry by bringing

his recitation close to song yet without reaching it. One of Byron's last vanities was the purchase of three "splendid" helmets for his Grecian expedition, with his famous crest engraved on them—one of them for himself and one for each of the friends—Trelawney and Pietra Gamba—who accompanied him.

In the difference between the beauty of Byron and the beauty of Shelley we see the contrast between the two types of the poetic personality, or perhaps between the personality of the greatest and most talented of the poetasters and that of one of the greatest of true poets: the beauty of the first earthy, sensual, arrogant, cynical, thoroughly self-conscious and histrionic, the naïve egotism of the poet gone over irretrievably into personal vanity; the beauty of the second spiritual, ascetic, naïve, free of self-consciousness, the native egotism remaining pure, untainted by vanity, needing no outer parade to maintain its integrity. The boy Shelley looked like a girl, with small head, profuse brown hair, eyes hazel, restless and brilliant, complexion fair and transparent, expression animated and effeminate. Here is part of Hogg's description of him as a freshman at Oxford: ". . . figure . . . slight and fragile, and yet his bones were large and strong . . . tall, but he stooped so much that he seemed of low stature. His clothes . . . expensive and 'stylish,' but . . . tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed, . . . gestures . . . abrupt, . . . sometimes violent, . . . even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful . . . complexion delicate and . . . feminine, of the purest red and white, . . . . . features . . . and head . . . unusually small, yet the last appeared of remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in . . . the agonies . . . of . . . thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through" it "unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. . . . His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful" . . . expressing "an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence. . . ." A different and later description gives the nose as straight, small and finely carved, the lip protruding, upper

lip too long and of a "tremulous firmness," the chin receding, small and pointed, the cheeks sunken. Here is Trellawney's record of his first meeting with Shelley—he (Trellawney) was talking with the Williamses in the Pisa house they shared with the Shelleys. In the passage outside the door he saw "a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine," though he could not make out the figure. Jane Williams called him and, "swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall, thin stripling held out both his hands; . . . flushed, feminine and artless face. . . . Was it possible this . . . could be the veritable monster at war with the world? excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil liberties by fiat of the . . . Lord Chancellor, discarded by . . . his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the founder of the Satanic School?" Shelley's voice, though never loud, was at best "somewhat unmusical," at worst "harsh, cruel, discordant and irritating." Yet as an orator he was effective—notably on the crazy excursion to liberate Ireland when he was only twenty—through the swift pliancy of his "ever-changing features," expressing "every mental emotion of which the human mind is capable."

The beauty of Keats was more of the earthy variety of Byron than of the exotic cast of Shelley—a fine large head, big nose, lips full but firmer than Byron's, as was the strong, slightly protruding chin. Altogether one of the finest of the faces of the poets, in which sensuousness, while undoubtedly present, seemed easily controlled under moral strength and directed by calm intellectual conviction. And this was the manner of the man, quite free from affectations or histrionics of any kind, objective in social address, as ready to listen as to talk, and always attentive with a bright, open countenance. Like Byron, he was of the earth, but unlike Byron he sought no support for his integrity by astonishing the world or by giving any impression other than that inherent in his repose. He was wistful about his little stature—referring to himself once as "Mister John Keats five feet high"—but he did nothing to add the illusion of inches to his height. His eyes impressed every one—large, dark-brown eyes of "wine-like

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lustre" that lit easily under emotion into "fiery brightness," and his touselled hair was "golden red." An unusual person surely, but a calm and resolute one, neither a desperate actor nor a frantic exotic. He had a sweet voice, and Haydon left a description of him at twenty-two reciting the *Ode to Pan* to the venerable Wordsworth, in the latter's room in London, declaiming "in his usual half-chant (most touching), walking up and down the room. . . ." But outside of being "most touching" in his delivery, he was on the whole a bad reader. He was never a dandy in dress and in 1819 he could not afford to be. Here is Coleridge's account of their only meeting, some nine months before Keats's first hemorrhage: "A loose, slack, not well-dressed youth met Mr. Green and myself in the lane near Highgate. Green knew him and spoke. It was Keats. He was introduced to me and stayed a minute or so. After he had left us a little way, he came back and said: 'Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand!' 'There is death in that hand,' I said when Keats was gone." A year later he was already emaciated.

Hogg as a youth was handsome and a joy to the girls, with a profusion of light brown hair which he wore coiled under his blue bonnet.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her forties was a slight, delicate figure, with dark curls falling on either side of her face, large, tender eyes richly fringed with dark eyelashes, a sunny smile and a general look of youthfulness. Tennyson described her as "fragile looking with great spirit eyes."

All his life Emerson was "greeted by his friends with a 'seems to me you are looking thinner than when I last saw you'"—long neck, long arms, longer legs, sloping shoulders, one a little higher than the other, a powerful and swift walker; big bony nose, large, bright-blue eyes, curved full mouth, and an air a little rustic, always eager, alert and benevolent. Holmes described him at the Saturday Club, where he talked little but listened "with a look never to be forgotten, his head stretched forward, his shoulders raised like the wings of an eagle and his eye watching the flight of the thought which had attracted his attention, as if

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if it were his prey, to be seized in mid-air and carried up to his eyry." From boyhood he was famous as a speaker, with his motionless, tense stance "save for an occasional thrust of his right hand, clenched with the fingers upward," and the voice that was described as unrelated to his body, having shoulders, lungs and a fist far larger than his.

Longfellow, with his long hair mingling with his beard and the "pearly tone of his complexion," was described by Tennyson as "one of the most enchanting of men." In his younger days at Harvard he was a great dandy, outdoing the undergraduates in brightly colored coats and an assortment of gay cravats. He walked with a springing gait.

Whittier was tall and spare, had a fine high brow and long face, one end of the mouth higher than the other, and "large and luminous black eyes, set in black eyebrows and fringed with thick black eye-lashes curiously curved inward."

Poe was below middle height, "erect in stature, . . . impassive, almost haughty in manner, . . . fastidiously clad in black . . . a look of distinction rather than beauty. . . . His dark curling hair was thrown back from his broad forehead . . . the pallid, . . . haggard features . . . Beneath the concealment of a short black moustache one saw the slight habitual contraction of the mouth and occasionally the quick . . . curl of the upper lip in scorn—a sneer . . . ; the eyes, large, jet-black, with steel-gray iris, clear, restless, ever expanding and contracting . . . with intelligence and emotion, as they bent their full, open, steady, unshrinking gaze from under the long black lashes that shaded them." Poe was a brilliant conversationalist, entralling to women and a fine speaker with a style "much purer and clearer than the pulpit commonly gets or requires." Once on a lecture date he read *Araaf* and *The Raven*, and Boston walked out on him. At a private reading in Richmond the hostess, "happening to glance toward the open window above the level roof of the greenhouse, beheld a group of sable faces the whites of whose eyes shone in strong relief against the surrounding darkness. These were a number of our family servants, who . . . had requested permission of my brother

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to witness the recital. As the speaker became more impassioned . . . , more conspicuous grew the circle of white eyes, until when at length he turned suddenly toward the window and, extending his arm, cried with awful vehemence, 'get thee back into the tempest, and the night's Plutonian shore!' there was a sudden disappearance of the sable visages, a scuttling of feet and the gallery audience was gone."

Tennyson was a broad-chested, powerful six-footer, with a fine forehead, deep "defiant eyelids," and an "ugly, ill-tempered mouth" with an angry "canine lift of the upper lip," his hands delicate, soft and long-fingered, but of great size and strength. He was swarthy, like all of his brothers, and had a deep furrow running on either side from nostril to chin—the last a truly remarkable bit of evidence of the supposed Plantagenet origins of the family. On the Continent he was taken for anything but an Englishman, and once in Ireland he was hailed by a peasant as a Spaniard come to lead a revolution. Carlyle described him as "a fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-colored, shaggy-headed man: . . . dusty, smoky, free and easy. . . ." He was near-sighted and always wore a monocle, and in later years a sombrero hat and a big cape with a velvet collar. He retained his broad Lincolnshire accent, and was a clever mimic, but not good for much in general discussion or debate. He was always shy of speaking in public, even after he was famous. Like Wordsworth, his forte was reading his own works, which he did freely with or without urging, in a booming voice with sudden falling inflections, while his hand rippled in time. He made running comments and demanded rapt attention, checking up any listener whose eye wandered with a sudden pause and a demand for his interpretation of the passage he was reading. One night in 1855 he dined with the Brownings and read them *all* of *Maud*, until 2:30 in the morning, Rossetti meanwhile sitting in the corner surreptitiously sketching him. When Hardy went to lunch with the laureate, "Mrs. Tennyson was lying as if in a coffin, but she got up to welcome me." Hardy "was surprised to find such an expression of humor in Tennyson's face, the corners of his mouth twitching with that mood when he talked; it

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was a genial human face, which all the portraits belied; and it was enhanced by a beard and hair straggling like briars, a shirt with a large loose collar, and old steel spectacles."

Browning was a dapper little man. His face was symmetrically egg-shaped, wide at the temples, rounded over the forehead, and tapering to the almost pointed chin, the whole framed in long hair and bushy throat beard which outlined without intruding on the face. As he grew older the face fattened to an ellipse. Dark eyes. Aquiline nose. Habitually a smart, fashionable dresser, given to lemon-colored gloves; but he once wrote to Elizabeth Barrett that he preferred "a blouse and a blue coat to all manner of dress and gentlemanly appointments." His conversation was vigorous and anecdotal, but he would never speak in public.

Whitman appropriately altered his general appearance to suit his philosophy—or possibly altered his philosophy to suit his appearance. He was always a six-foot 200-pounder with pale blue eyes, large shapely hands, deep rich voice, hairy chest, skin pink and tender as a baby's, and a grace in his gestures, even in the elephantine swing of his walk, but especially in the sea where he habitually swam naked. Until he was thirty—the beginning of *Leaves of Grass*—he made sartorial concessions in the form of smartly fitting clothes, trim beard, and dapper cane. Thereafter he became the heavy, unkempt lounger: the "ancient and manly beard, the concomitant of the apostles, of the men of Rome, of Petrarch and Tasso and Shakespeare"—the resemblance of his filthy, silken bush to the beards of the last three being dubious, but it made a good phrase and most of his hearers knew no more of the matter than he did; the loose workmen's clothes generally too large for him, high boots, big felt hat, "red shirt with the collar nonchalantly—or carefully—opened . . . to show red flannel underneath." He had sensuous lips which contradicted the direct glance of the eye and the "obstinate purposefulness of the nose," and Holloway suspects that he affected the prophetic beard to cover the lips, as an assertion of his inwardly doubted masculinity. Huneker found him looking the "magnificently fierce old man he chants in his books," but in fact "gentle

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. . . to womanliness" and he "gave me the impression of a feminine soul in a masculine envelope. . . . He lumbered majestically, his heavy chest exposed, but was a feeble old man." He was always a great talker, especially when he could hobnob—and impress—"powerful, uneducated persons." New York in his day was an infernal din of iron tires on cobblestones, and the characteristic picture of Whitman discovers him seated by an omnibus driver—any omnibus driver—shouting at him passages of Homer or *Richard II*.

Arnold was a beautiful young man with majestic manners—the Jove-like voice and Olympian wave of the hand.

Morris's eyes had the "filmed observant look of the eagle, seeing everything." His hands and arms to the elbow were habitually stained with the wool he handled all day.

The marks of Rossetti were the colorless complexion, high cheekbones, the blue-gray eyes sunk cavernously under protruding brows, the deep furrow across the bridge of the nose, and the "large breathing nostrils," giving altogether a look of bull-like strength. Besides, there was the long, curly, neglected mop of silky, rich-brown hair falling to his shoulders, the powerful square-cut chin, the pock-mark on the cheek, the white, delicate, womanish hands, and the small ears. In youth his cheeks were sunken and he grew a drooping moustache. Later his face fleshed flabbily, he added a heavy beard up to the ears, and wore spectacles, doubled when reading. He always lounged with an air of self-reliance, his hands habitually in the pockets of his old, frayed clothes. Once he left a party at the Ford Madox Browns' suddenly and wrote later that it was because he had grown so fat since he last wore his dress suit that he was afraid he would burst his trousers. He had excellent manners, a deep, baritone voice, and a hearty "Hullo" for friends. In his house we see him lounging "in the torn and frayed basket-chair into which, with his wide hips, he fitted . . . exactly" as if it had "become a part of him," or later, after he was invalided, lying on the sofa with head down and feet up on the back, making charming small talk with his friends.

Christina Rosetti was pretty, but delicate-looking, high-

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cheekboned, olive-skinned, with deep brown eyes that sometimes showed the white over the iris.

Emily Brontë was tall, thin, loose-jointed, with irregular aquiline nose and large expressive mouth, beautiful dark brown hair, "kind, kindling, liquid" hazel eyes. No clothes became her anyway, but she always wore badly fitting skirts and affected huge leg-o'-mutton sleeves in and out of fashion, even in Brussels where Charlotte tried to Frenchify herself.

Emily Dickinson had great sherry-colored eyes, a long upper lip, and hair of bronze Titian-red which she wore parted in the middle and low in the back and half-covered by a velvet snood of the same color. Her skin was velvety white with no tint of color and her teeth were squirrel-like. She wore white exclusively, was a perpetual, playful talker, and brilliant in repartee. She emphasized a joke or the end of a story by throwing up her hands dramatically.

Meredith was a smart dresser, husky and handsome, with deep blue eyes, a distinguished beard, a feminine delicacy of feature, and the general impression of great vitality. He had a deep rich voice and was a brilliant dinner conversationalist, his talk seeming like his writing and often suggesting his characters.

Once when Riley was a boy he needed a new outfit of clothes for some occasion, but got himself up as best he could with a paper collar and ink on his sock where it showed through his shoe. When his father saw him he said, "Well, my son, now that you are ready to go into society, we will go into the garden and hoe weeds." Years later Hamlin Garland called on him at the Parker House in Boston. "He met me in a red undershirt and black trousers, busily adjusting gold studs in the bosom of a hard-boiled shirt. 'Come right in, p'fessor,' he called in a drawl which was characteristic of Indiana. 'Take a cheer and don't mind my "dishabilly"—I'm just dressin' for dinner.' His smile was cordial, but his mouth was puckered at one corner for the reason, as I soon discovered, that he was carrying a quid of tobacco in that cheek. He was a short blond man, with square shoulders and a long, bald head which he himself

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described as the tack-hammer variety. Although he wore pinch-nose glasses, his round gray eyes were plainly visible at all times, and whilst they possessed a comical light, his face remained as blank as the side of a china bowl. His voice, in spite of his quid, was singularly musical."

Swinburne, being wholly without affectation, was in physique and manner the most idiotic sane man who ever lived: the tiny, frail body, five feet four high, with shoulders so sloping as to be almost no shoulders, bearing up on a long neck the enormous head with its petal-white skin, deep-set gray-green eyes staring straight ahead, pouting mouth, receding chin, and vast shock of red hair swelled out like a balloon. He had a straight carriage but was always twitching and hopping about in excitement, jerking his hands with the long, thin fingers, crossing and recrossing his feet shod in tiny low shoes, or pressing one toe against the other heel. He walked with a dancing gait, had limitless vitality, endurance and courage, and manners exquisite or witheringly stiff as he chose. He dressed carefully in the exact mode, his coats being cut to conceal his sloping shoulders. At the height of his notoriety a firm of tailors published his absurd portrait in full dress, to advertise their craftsmanship. Swinburne was a fine talker and reader in his "high-pitched Northumbrian sing-song." Gosse describes him reading from the proofs of *Songs Before Sunrise*, "dancing about the room convulsed with passion. . . ." In those passages where Napoleon III was denounced, "his voice sounded like the hissing of serpents, while he jigged about the room, his hair flying . . . and his arms flapping and fluttering at his sides." During one of his readings the audience was so moved that everybody slipped slowly to their knees. On another occasion a Pre-Raphaelite lady flung a crown of laurel on his head. During these recitations he was usually a little drunk and, when the audience was composed of friends, would shed his superfluous garments as he declaimed. He liked especially to oblige with recitations of *La Fille* complete, or with excerpts from the works of his distinguished ancestor, the Marquis de Sade.

Stephen Phillips had large, clear blue eyes, set wide apart,

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a big, aquiline nose, and a heavy chin thrust pugnaciously forward and perforated with a mouth that was tiny, especially the upper lip. Though a failure as an actor, he was a fine reciter and his conversational voice was histrionic, being slow, "loud" and "vibrating." His manners were so erratic and overbearing that Kipling, his neighbor, forbade him the house.

Eugene Field carried his practical humor into his dress. When a quartet used to come to his house to rehearse he would walk into the parlor and say, "Well, boys, let's take off our coats and take it easy; it's too hot." Which he would then do, blazing forth in a red flannel undershirt with white cuffs and collar pinned to it. After taking a job on the *Daily News* in Chicago he felt as a journalist that he should draw some attention. So on a cold morning in December he arrayed himself in a linen duster, buttoned from knees to collar, put an old straw hat on his head, and carrying a shabby old book in one hand and a palm-leaf fan in the other, walked solemnly down Clark Street, past the City Hall, to his office, jeered at from windows and followed by a shouting mob. He did, in fact, have the worst possible taste in dress, knew it and celebrated it, when he could afford to, by presenting neckties to his friends.

At college Stevenson was known as "Velvet Coat," for he always wore one. In his smooth pale face the eyes were the most striking feature, being a deep brown and set extraordinarily far apart. Normally they had a shy, quick glance, but when he was moved they seemed to blaze. When he was a young man his hair was light yellow but after twenty-five it grew darker. He wore it long, for fear of taking cold, and cut it short in the tropics.

Francis Thompson was an alien figure in this world. As a little boy he sidled when he walked and was perpetually hitching up his coat as if it were falling off at the neck. "His eye had no brightness: it swung laboriously upon its object." He had a way of straightening suddenly to a soldierly bearing which, along with his war-like compositions, at school got him the nick-name of "l'homme militaire." In his early twenties his pace on the street was described as

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“the quick short steps, the sudden and apparently causeless hesitation or full stop, then the old quick pace again, the continued muttered soliloquy, the frail and slight figure.” He would “leave his father’s reputable door-step with untied laces, dragging their length on the pavement past the windows of curious and critical neighbors,” and at medical school his awkward, absent-minded gait generally excited the jeers of the other students. As a man, even after he had emerged from hardship, he was always a pitiable figure, restless and not at home in the world: his hair and straggling beard always unkempt, his face bearing the marks of the torments of his gutter years. Even when he had money he never had a new suit, for good clothes vanished in his generally vague, non-descript appearance. He wore a great brown cape—even on the hottest days—and a smashed hat. Yet he had an aloof distinction of manner and a cultivated speech, altogether a “great child” who was “incapable of pose or unkindness.” His familiar mannerisms were the perpetual lighting of matches and the plucking up of his coat behind. He haunted fire-places and was forever getting his clothes burned. Priest-like he was “audible at his prayers—or poetry,” and he read in a deep tremulous voice. When not frightened he was a fluent but vague and non-controversial talker, and always wasted hours in disquisition at the *Academy* office when he came to get his review books or bring in his copy. On important subjects he was usually silent, but “he could explain nine times what was clear, and talk about snuff or indigestion or the posting of a letter until the room swam around us.” Once when he was on the staff of *The Weekly Register* he was put in charge of a brilliant and important visitor. Thompson talked to him all day without ceasing, and at dinner announced, “I have never known G—— more brilliant.” When Thompson was five a consecrating medal was put around his neck and it was still there when he died.

Wilde was fat and oily, with a bilious and often dirty complexion, gross, almost colorless lips, the lower one hanging, and a black front tooth that showed when he talked. He was over six feet tall, broad and thick-set, “like a Ro-

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man Emperor of the decadence." His hands were flabby and greasy, he shook his hands limply, and had a mannerism of pulling his heavy, pouchy jowl with his right hand when he spoke. He was always over-dressed in tight-fitting clothes. During his period of poverty he increased instead of decreased his sartorial pretensions, wearing knee-breeches in the evening and silk stockings and always carrying some strange flower in his button-hole—a green carnation or a gilded lily. The whole impression of him changed when he talked in his musical, tenor voice. His gray eyes became expressive and vivacious, and his face glowed with infectious gaiety and enthusiasm. His conversation made him an immediate social success when he went to London and he was recognized as the most brilliant talker in England.

## HUMOR

Many poets have a spontaneous kind of gaiety that passes for humor, though it has nothing to do with it. Witness Shelley romping "all over the convent" of Bagna Cavallo with Byron's little Allegra, though Shelley never in his life saw the absurdity of anything.

Humor or the sense of humor is the perception of an incongruity between a normal expectation and the abnormal or distorted fact. There are many planes of humor but four are easily distinguishable:

There is *physical humor*, delight in the distortion of normal physical appearance or normal physical comfort—the "practical joke."

A little higher is *paronomasia* or punning, delight in the incongruity between the normal meaning of a word and some irrelevant meaning of the same or a phonetically similar word. The list of poets who have been afflicted with this mild form of idiocy is impressive, including as it does Shakespeare, Wotton, Prior, Coleridge, Lamb, Moore, Keats, Tennyson, Holmes, Whitman and Swinburne. Here appar-

ently is a pastime that can be indulged without violating the serious aspects of the poet's self and his world. Punning is not far removed from random infantile gaiety.

*Wit* is the articulation of a humorous perception so as to convey it to an audience. It depends on the social sense quite as much as upon the sense of humor, for the humor of a group is simpler than that of its members, and excellent public wit is often flat when repeated or written. Many of the most humorous of the poets have had little or no social wit, as Dryden, Pope and Cowper; and among the poetic wits—Waller, Garth, Savage, Johnson, Rogers, Wilde and Burns—only the last is important as a poet. There is a difference between wit for its own sake and malicious wit or sarcasm, but it is often hard to draw and I shall not attempt to draw it here.

Beyond and around wit lies the broad domain of un-specialized *humor* which may find expression in intimate conversation, or in writing, in laughter or simply in chronic and inarticulate amusement at the spectacle of things. The perfect sense of humor perceives the incongruities in everything human, especially in itself. It sees the material of life as men assume it to be, and that spectacle is very brave and tragic; at the same time it sees the material of life as it is, in contrast to human assumptions, and the spectacle is very absurd. To the humorist both spectacles are one, one revelation of man as he is and as he behaves. Probably the highest type of intellect sees the comic and the tragic all in the same general light of true perception, instead of from the separate slants either of which excludes the other. To the highest intelligence there is neither a lofty and reverent attitude nor a flippant and irreverent one, but only one state of things as they truly are, sometimes integral and resolved, sometimes unresolved, incongruous and ridiculous.

In approaching the sense of humor of the poets, we are at once confronted with an inconsistency which forestalls generalization. There on the one hand stand Chaucer and Shakespeare, great poets and great humorists; there on the other hand stand Wordsworth and Whitman, great poets and great humorless dunces. In order to distinguish between these

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different sorts of poets it is necessary to draw a distinction between two types of mind which may be found among the poets, as among people generally.

*Objective* or extravertal people and poets are those who find truth in the outer world or its contents, being most alive imaginatively when they are identified with something outside themselves—"filling some other body." Typical objective poets have been Chaucer, Shakespeare, Chatterton, Burns, Keats, Browning, Emily Dickinson. These, it is safe to say, all had humor. There was in their minds no sacred spot that must not be trespassed on lightly, no altar that must be approached only in vestments. A profound integrity, to be sure. But no special intellectual attitude or assumption that was too sacred to be criticized.

*Subjective* or introverted people and poets, on the other hand, come at the truth by drawing the contents of the world into their minds and relating them to other material stored there—that is to say, reflecting on them. And for this purpose of reflection there is, so to speak, a sacred mirror somewhere in their consciousness, a god-like and living essence, the true and ultimately important center of the world. From this center the oracle, the god himself, speaks from time to time. And his message is always final, absolute and single. There is no incongruity about it, nothing humorous. Those who listen otherwise than reverently are guilty of mortal sin. Chief among the subjective poets have been Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Whittier, Tennyson, Poe, Whitman, Thompson. Generally speaking, these and many others—for most of the poets have been introvertal—have lacked the easy, universal view. They have seen only the absolute truth, and not the compromising ridiculousness, of things. They have looked at life, not through binoculars, but through a telescope. And not only must the eye-piece in the mind, the center of the universe, the mirroring god, be kept pure and sacred, but everything that it sees in the outer world is thereby sanctified also. First of all, the poet in person is sacred and beyond irony, then his reflections and his expressions, his poetry. Then as the seeing ray expands outward across the world, humor retreats

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before it. In whatever domain subjective poets can be humorous they cannot be poetic. Their humor therefore is in inverse ratio to their comprehensiveness which is their greatness, and in the greatest of them—Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Whitman—we find virtually no humor at all.

It becomes necessary to qualify the generality I have attempted. Generally it is true that the subjective poets have been humorless. But on the other hand there have been such as Dryden and Byron and Tennyson, each of whom was an introvert and each of whom had humor in his fashion. But I think that in each of these cases the humor was a measure of the poet's limitation. Theoretically and absolutely speaking, the ideal, the perfect subjective poet is perforce humorless—and we see that ideal approached in the cases of Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley and Whitman. But in proportion as the subjective poet admits humor in his psyche, he violates his vision, he proves apostate to his faith, he fails in his duties as prophet, he is a confused, self-mistrustful and unhappy man, and he is a disingenuous and bad poet. This, I submit, was the case with Dryden and with Byron. Two great talents. Yet each was able to see himself as a little absurd—whereupon the god within sneered a little, the mirror was tarnished a little, and life became an object of scorn. The subjective poet has a world to delineate as great as his objective colleague. But he must pass a more serious discipline in preparing himself for the task. The trouble is that he is seldom born pure. There is usually something of the devil in him, something of the extravert. Yet he must take the veil for good. He must kneel before the altar of his own profundity. He can be gay as parsons are gay. But he must never smile a really inclusive smile.

Outside of their works the records of the poets' humor are meager and confined mostly to wit in which few of them shone.

The record of Shakespeare's wit is hardly hilarious. There was the pun *à propos* of his god-paternity to one of Ben Jonson's children. Ben found him in an attitude of thought and asked him the reason. Will replied that he was pondering what to give his godchild and had just decided: "I' faith,

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Ben, I'll e'en give him a dozen of good latten spoons, and thou shalt translate them."

Waller had a tremendous, international reputation for wit, in spite of his "obstinate sobriety." Being shown the Duchess of Newcastle's verses on the death of a stag, "he declared that he would give all his compositions to have written them; and being charged with the exorbitance of his adulation, answered that 'nothing was too much to be given, that a lady might be saved from the disgrace of such a vile performance.'

James II having seduced Sedley's daughter and made her Countess of Dorchester, "I hate ingratitude," said Sedley, "and as the king has made my daughter a countess, I will endeavor to make his daughter a queen"—referring to the Princess Mary, wife of William of Orange.

Rochester was "eager of . . . riotous and licentious pleasures" and had humor of a broad kind. He "pursued low amours in mean disguises, and always acted with great exactness and dexterity the characters which he assumed." Having studied medicine, "he erected a stage on Tower-hill, and harangued the populace as a mountebank. . . ."

Prior's diplomatic *mot* has become immortal. While secretary to the embassy at Paris he was one day being shown Versailles, especially Le Brun's murals of Louis XIV's victories, and was asked if the English King's palace could boast such decorations. Said Prior, "the monuments of my master's actions are to be seen everywhere but in his own house." One day he sat at the Paris opera by a man who was so transported that he accompanied the principal performer with his own voice. Prior began to vituperate the actor so loudly and eloquently that his French neighbor, ceasing from his own song, began to protest, saying that the performer was among the greatest singers of the age. "I know all that," replied Prior, "*mais il chante si haut, que je ne scaurois vous entendre.*"

Pope's half-sister reported that he never laughed heartily, and Spence that he never exceeded a "particular easy smile."

Swift stubbornly resisted any tendency to laughter or gaiety, maintaining a countenance sour and severe.

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After James Thomson lost his job as Secretary of the Briefs and was in dire poverty, he was introduced to the Prince of Wales who asked him the state of his affairs. To which Thomson replied that "they were in a more poetical posture than formerly," and so got a pension of £100.

Chatterton wrote a political essay for *The North Briton* which was accepted but withheld from publication—and Chatterton from his payment—because of the Lord Mayor's death. Chatterton then made the following calculation:

	£	s.	d.
Lost by his death in this Essay—	1	11	6
Gained in Elegies— £2 2s.			
"    " Essays— £3 3s.			
	5	5	0
Am glad he is dead by	3	13	6

Burns arrived on the quay at Greenock in time to see a sailor rescue a drowning rich merchant. The merchant gave his rescuer one shilling and the crowd protested loudly. But Burns intervened—"Leave him alone. The gentleman is, of course, the best judge of the value of his life."

Crabbe was awfully earnest and candid in society and altogether left no record of humor of any kind. When he was an old man Joanna Baillie sent him a present of a black cock and asked him to have a look at it before delivering it to the cook. Finding the bird indeed handsome, Crabbe suspected that Miss Baillie wanted it preserved, so he went to the trouble and expense of having it stuffed.

Rogers had a reputation for quiet, venomous wit. Gally Knight was a great talker and a bad listener. When Rogers was told that Knight was going deaf, he remarked, "It is from lack of practice." Against the charge of malice, he defended himself thus: "They tell me I say ill-natured things. I have a very weak voice; if I did not say ill-natured things no one would hear what I said."

There is small substantiation for any suspicion of humor on Wordsworth's part. There are Dorothy's frequent, fond entries that she and William and dear Coleridge had been

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“very merry,” and there is Hazlitt’s portrait of the poet at twenty-eight, with the “convulsive inclination to laughter around the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face”—this might have been due to embarrassment, or it might indeed have been the dying spasms of a youthful humorousness of which no record remains to liven the universal gray. Certainly it was, on the whole, a life of sublime fatuous candor. The one possibly relieving exception I know of was put in evidence by Wordsworth himself, when taxed with lack of humor. Once in a country lane, a strange woman ran into him and gasped out breathlessly, “Sir, have you seen my husband?” “Madam,” replied the sage, “I did not know you had one.” No doubt someone told Wordsworth after the event that this excruciating bit of literalness was funny.

Coleridge was able to take himself only a trifle less prophetically. There was a certain facetiousness in his letters and he admitted to being an “immense favorite” with “a number of very pretty young women in Stowey, all musical . . . ; for I pun, conundrumize, *listen*, and dance.” Without the influence of Wordsworth Coleridge might have been given at least to sprightliness. But his master was heavy over him and the playful spirit as well as the sense of the ridiculous grew rudimentary within him. During the Utopian pantisocracy period he addressed verses to an ass as “brother.” In the first issue of *The Watchman*, when he was twenty-four, he wrote an essay on “National Fasts” with the motto prefixed, “Wherefore my Bowels shall sound like an Harp”—and so lost many subscribers.

Landor was the boyish, boisterous ass whom Dickens transcribed as Mr. Boythorn in *Bleak House*. He had a roar of a laugh which was interchangeable with his roar of fury, but he had no subtlety or flash, and was in his own actions a perpetual spectacle of high-spirited, furious absurdity.

Byron had natively the comprehensive sense of humor, the sort of universal intelligence, of which one imagines Chaucer and Shakespeare to have been made. Almost alone among the poets, he was able to jest about his own serious output. Writing to Moore of Murray’s reaction to his

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*Prophecy*, he could say: "He almost insinuates that my last productions are *dull*. Dull, sir!—damme, dull! I believe he is right." Byron should have been among the great, objective poets. But his egotism, instead of diffusing into easy sympathy with all men, was checked by his own self-consciousness, and became at last identified with his personal vanity. Thus repressed, it became turbulent and unhealthy, and with it the humorous intelligence, limited in its play, became hectic and extravagant, bordering on the cheap and "practical," and eventually diseased and sadistic. Hating a quack named Lavendar who was cruelly trying to straighten his foot, Byron one day chattered gibberish at him, then asked him what language it was, and when the ignorant man said "Italian," he burst into delighted laughter. At a Geneva hotel with the Shelleys he wrote his age on the customs register as "100." Not long after this he and the Shelleys and Claire were in a boat on Lake Geneva and he proposed to sing them an Albanian song—"Now be sentimental and give me your attention"—and when they were quiet he regaled them with a "strange wild howl," and afterwards laughed long at his own foolishness and the disappointment of the others. Byron's frolicsome treatment of his wife during her pregnancy bordered on pathological sadism. During his last journey to Greece the captain of his ship came in for a Byronic jest. This Captain Scott was very fat and had a bright scarlet waistcoat which he wore on ceremonious occasions. Byron thought the waistcoat would button around both him and Trelawney. One calm day he bribed the cabin boy to fetch it during the captain's siesta. "Now," he called, standing on the gangway with one arm in the waistcoat, "put your arm in, Tre; we'll jump overboard and take the shine out of it." So they did.

Keats had naturally a high gaiety with a warm infectious laugh, and while not exactly a humorous outlook on life, yet he possessed a genuine bubbling, unsophisticated sense of humor which was capable of ironic perceptions, and he was not too egotistical to look at himself in its honest light. His buffoonery is in the record of his "concerts," when every one present imitated a different instrument and all together

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launched into bedlam. His wit is everywhere in his letters. His reference to his own person as "Mister John Keats five feet high" has been mentioned, and in *Cap and Bells* he passed the ultimate test for a poet and burlesqued his own work. Surely Keats was of the order of the great objective poets, being excluded from their number by a flaw of external fate, while Byron was excluded by a flaw of his own nature. Keats wrote that at Novellos with Tom Moore and Hunt he was "devastated and excruciated with bad and repeated puns." Yet he was himself much addicted to this deplorable practice, and his facility in it became one horn of the ghastly irony of his last days. On the way to Italy, with the shadow of death consciously over him, he regaled Severn and the other passengers with jokes and puns. In his last letter to Brown he wrote: ". . . at my worst, even in quarantine, I summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year in my life." And Severn wrote of him in Naples, "he made an Italian pun today." In his final torture his humor stayed with him as long as anything did.

Whittier had plenty of humor. In his old age he used to "track the lion-hunters," that sought him out "and found that the same individuals went to Emerson and Longfellow and other authors and made precisely the same speeches. . . . One day he received a letter from a man in a neighboring town asking for a loan of ten dollars, and assuring him that he should blow his brains out if Mr. Whittier did not send him the money. . . . He did not send the money, comforting himself, he said, with the thought that the man really had no brains to blow out. 'I must confess, however,' he added, 'I looked rather anxiously at the newspapers for the next few days, but seeing no news of a suicide in the neighboring town I was relieved.'"

Longfellow told a story of two English female tourists who called on him without a letter of introduction and "excused themselves . . . by saying that as there were no ruins to see in the country they had thought it would be a good idea to call on Mr. Longfellow."

Tennyson wrote to Emily Sellwood: "I dare not tell you

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how high I rate humor which is generally most fruitful in the highest and most solemn spirits . . . almost all the greatest have been pregnant with this glorious power." That is pretty awesome, but in spite of it Tennyson did have humor of an unsophisticated, gruff, loud-laughing, rustic variety. It was limited from without by his period, the prim sententiousness exemplified above. And it was heavily weighted from within by the sense of his own prophetic greatness, a fatuousness which the whole world conscientiously helped him to maintain. Typical of the latter were such anecdotes as these, which he delighted to recount: After he had left an inn in the Isle of Skye the landlord was asked, "Did he know who had been staying at his house?"—and when told, "It was the poet Tennyson," he replied, "Lor', to think o' that! and sure I thought he was a shentleman!"; and again when an innkeeper near Stirling was likewise told, "It was Tennyson, the poet, you had wi' you t'other night." "An' what may *he* be?" "Oh, he is the writer o' verses such as you see i' the papers." "Noo to think o' that, jeest a pooblic writer, and I gied him ma best bedroom!" Not Wordsworth could equal the gravity with which Tennyson would discuss with Victoria their common cross in being everywhere stared at. But Tennyson was a gay punster while at Cambridge, and he had a rough Lincolnshire laugh. After he had personally read his *Welcome to Alexandra* to the princess herself, at her request, it simultaneously struck them both as funny, his reading to her his own complimentary poem; he dropped the book and they both burst into uncontrollable laughter. Fitzgerald and Tennyson once had a contest to see who could write the weakest Wordsworthian line, and both claimed to have composed this one:

A Mr. Wilkinson, a clergyman.

Altogether, give Tennyson's greatness its needful dose of deference, and give lip service to the contemporary sentimentalities, and he was a robust, even a ribald old laureate. At Farringford he would growl very broad Lincolnshire stories, guffawing loudly at the end of each. And in his old age he had a habit of composing hilarious limericks in company, to

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the great tremulousness of Lady Tennyson. Tennyson, as I have already suggested, was of the subjective order of poets, and by the quantum of his sense of humor we can exactly measure his inferiority as a poet to Wordsworth or Shelley.

Holmes as a youth decided against the ministry because a clergyman "looked and talked so much like an undertaker." While he was practicing medicine—at which he wasn't very successful—he posted a sign above his office: "Small fevers gratefully received." Holmes, in addition to his famous, authentic humorousness, was one more who was addicted to paronomasia.

Browning had a way of paying compliments so literal as to be disconcerting: "I had a delightful evening at your house. I never spoke to you once."

Rossetti's humor was mostly histrionic and posed. He once wrote to Ford Madox Brown, in an invitation to dinner (the Browns' house being notoriously filthy), "If dirt is quite essential, will turn some dogs in." He called his wife affectionately, "Countess of Puddlecock" or "Baroness of the Stews," after Mrs. Jacobson, the procuress. He once referred very shockingly to his picture, *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, as "the blessed white eye-sore." More spontaneous, and usually accompanied by a loud, healthy laugh, was his physical humor. Once, walking with Mr. and Mrs. Morris, and passing a school as the children were singing a hymn, Rossetti thrust his great head through the window and shouted, "Amen." Mr. and Mrs. Morris fled, and the school mistress came out in anger. But in ten minutes Rossetti was holding an examination in geography and awarding prizes. When Miss Herbert, a famous actress who was for years indifferent to his admiration, finally came to call, Rossetti emerged on all fours from under the heavy brocade tablecloth that reached to the floor. When he was at Bath and perfectly well, he had himself "wheeled about in a Bath chair, wagging his head from side to side, his tongue lolling out, to the great scandal of passers-by."

Meredith was a witty dinner-table companion and had an infectious, torrential laugh. When he was seventy-five and ill, the newspapers featured his condition, and one of them

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stated that he had only "periods of partial consciousness." Meredith saw the item and telegraphed *The Westminster*: "Dorking report of me incorrect; . . . the difficulty with me is to obtain unconsciousness."

A notorious hack once sent Thackeray his book, which the balladist acknowledged with a note: "Your volume has arrived. I shall lose no time reading it."

Riley, while on the *Dispatch*, astonished the world by claiming to have discovered an unknown Poe poem in the possession of a hunchback who lived in a cave. Every critic in the country joined in the ensuing wrangle, and Riley shed real tears in recounting his discovery of the manuscript and explaining his inability to produce it—until the hoax was discovered.

Emily Dickinson's humor was her perpetual attitude toward life, and her wit was in almost everything she said or wrote, a wit usually packed with local and personal nuances many of which are baffling today. When, at twenty-three, she was in Washington with her father she once sat at dinner by the old Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. When the burning plum pudding was offered her, she cried, "Oh, sir, may one eat hell-fire with impunity here?" There were the hundreds of notes she wrote to Sister Sue and miscellaneous friends, most of them sparkling with playfulness—"Pussy her striped greetings." When sending her nephew a tiny pie she wrote: "Dear Ned: you know that pie you stole? Well, this is that pie's brother. Mother told me when I was a boy, that I must turn over a new leaf. I call that foliage admonition. Shall I commend it to you?" On the birthday of her little niece she sends a knot of her choicest flowers and this greeting: "Dear Mattie—I am glad it is your birthday. It is this little bouquet's birthday too. Its father is a very old man by the name of nature whom you never saw. Be sure to live in vain, dear. I wish I had!" Again, when her nephew had been admonished for some reported indiscretion, she wrote: "Grandma characteristically hopes Neddy will be a good boy. Obtuse ambition of Grandma's!" When the wife of a local, and apparently unattractive doctor, died she wrote: "Dear Sue—I should think she

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would rather be the Bride of the Lamb than that old pill-box!"

Wilde always laughed at his own jokes whether any one else did or not. His famous *bons mots* seem, in the light of later evidence, to have been often prepared beforehand, and his social talent to have lain less in spontaneous wit than in skill in converging the threads of conversation to a point and a moment appropriate to his prepared quip. Mrs. John W. Alexander has kindly permitted me to print the following anecdote which is in point. During the 'nineties Miss Rudell's salon was one of the regular rendezvous of the intellectuals of Paris. There was also in habitual attendance a necessary cousin of Miss Rudell, a Miss X, a famous malaprop and a bore. One day Mr. and Mrs. Alexander and Wilde set out together for the weekly gathering. Wilde fell silent and dropped behind, as he frequently did at such times, and the Alexanders knew an ex-tempore *mot* was being prepared. In due course at the party Wilde forged casually into the general conversation and began to turn it skillfully now this way, now that. All of his friends knew something was coming and gave him his head. At last he had everything prepared and, perfectly timed, a dramatic silence fell, with everybody's attention on Wilde. Miss X (leaning forward)—"And how did you leave the weather in London, Mr. Wilde?" The word that was to have delighted the English-speaking world was never uttered. Later, when Mrs. Alexander recounted the episode to Whistler, he said, "She's a valuable woman." All of which may explain Wilde's more spectacular sayings, as his lofty response to the American customs examiner—"I have nothing to declare but my genius"; or his saying that "if America is a childish nation it is in its second childhood"; or his apophthegms, "The woman who hesitates is won," "Familiarity breeds consent." But it hardly accounts for his brilliant responses to the surprises of the trial, as when the lawyer asked him if he took a certain young man to Brighton and bought him a white straw hat with a red and blue ribbon: "Yes," replied Wilde, "I am afraid that was his unfortunate choice." On one occasion a group was assembled, including Wilde and

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Frank Harris. Harris, it seems, was addicted to plagiarism in his conversation and on this occasion told as his own an anecdote which every one recognized as a paraphrase of a story of Anatole France. A silence followed the story, which Wilde at last broke. "Frank," he said gravely, "Anatole France would have spoiled that story."

Eugene Field's incorrigible joking was usually of a "practical" nature, and seldom rose above the status of the hoax. Once when Wilde was expected in Denver, Field hired a fine landau and had himself driven about the streets, posing with great bored face, flowing hair, and a huge sun-flower in his button-hole, while the populace cheered. Field was fired from three colleges for his pranks. He always spent hours composing and illustrating letters to his friends, using five or six kinds of ink to make them look grotesque. Once when a group of German serenaders had gathered in front of a hotel to honor Carl Schurz in his campaign for Missouri senator, Field, who was with the candidate's party as a reporter, rushed out, and impersonating Schurz, addressed them in broken English. Again, at a large meeting in the same campaign, Field suddenly mounted the platform and began: "Ladies and Shentlemen: I haf such a pad colt dot et vas not bossile for me to make you a speedg tonight, but I haf die bleasure to introduce to you my brilliant chournal-astic friend Euchene Fielt, who will spoke you in my blace." While in Denver on *The Tribune*, Field hung over his desk, "This is my busy day," and on the wall "God bless our proof-reader. He can't call for him too soon." In his office he kept an old bottomless chair—the only chair in the room besides his own—across whose chasm he would carelessly throw old newspapers. The angry visitor who had come to avenge personalities or libels in the paper would drop unsuspectingly into the trap, and would then be overwhelmed and mollified by Field's lavish apologies and his pitiful expressions of humiliation at having to receive so important a visitor in such shabby circumstances. On one occasion Field invited Bok, Riley, Opie Reed and others to dine at his house at six. At seven he explained that the dinner would be late as the cook was new and his wife was out. At eight

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Riley investigated and found no preparations for dinner in the kitchen, and, upon some one's suggesting that they get supper, it appeared that there was nothing to eat in the refrigerator or pantry. "That's a joke on us," said Field, and, the front door being locked, Bok and Riley crawled out a cellar window, and after a long delay—the day being Sunday and the stores closed—returned and crawled back through the cellar window with provisions, only to find the company enjoying a supper which Field had produced upon their departure. The party lasted all night, everybody at length donning one of Mrs. Field's dresses—upon which scene she returned at seven in the morning and, after long ringing of the front-door bell, was admitted by Field, who then discovered how to manage the lock. Field once wired to Bok: "City of New Orleans purposing to give me largest public reception on sixth ever given an author. . . . Mayor and city officials peculiarly desirous of having you introduce me to vast audience. . . . Hate to ask you to travel so far, but would be great favor to me. . . ." Bok wired his assent, and at the same time wrote to a friend in New Orleans, and learned by reply that there was no such plan. Bok sent a message to his New Orleans friend, to be telegraphed to Field from New Orleans on the sixth: "Find whole thing to be a fake. Nice job to put over on me. Bok." Field, receiving the wire, told his Chicago friends ecstatically of the success of his joke. Field must have had other qualities by which he held the friendship of men like Bok, in spite of his humor.

Thompson was Shelleyesque in gaiety and he had a "dewy laugh."

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Marvell (not mentioned in this section). Kidding the Russian court, *The Struggle for Existence*, p. 321.

Page 96, Landor. Exaggerated Humor at end of rages, *In Action*, p. 397.

Pages 96-7, Byron. See the bear at Cambridge, *Pets*, p. 199; his remarkable treatment of his wife, *Love*, p. 199.

Bryant (not mentioned in this section). See his letter to his mother respecting his marriage, *Love*, pp. 445-6.

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Pages 97-8, Keats. See the "fairy lamplighter," *Death*, pp. 278-9.  
Pages 101-2, Dickinson. See the elaborate valentine, *Love*, p. 457.

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In spite of the number of poets who have indulged more or less in solitude, I doubt if any poet has been truly misanthropic. A few have been ascetic in philosophy, a very few ascetic in practice. But all have remained interested in humanity, sometimes only as a generalized mass, existing in terms of abstractions such as "freedom" and "tyranny," "justice" and "injustice," but more often as individuals with their private problems. If a poet is of the objective variety—Chaucer, Shakespeare, Cowper, Keats—his imagination tends to project itself into people around him as individuals. If he is of the subjective variety—Spenser, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Whitman—, although he may draw people inward to fit his intellectual scheme, yet the scheme will usually involve some mental pattern of generalized social love, and it will be this abstraction rather than individual human beings, which will engage his enthusiasm. In either case the poetic ego, whether personally or generally, expands to include—that is, to love—mankind. And in either case that expansive gesture may be thwarted by superficial qualities having no relation to either the objective or the subjective nature. Either sort of poet may be naturally gregarious. Either may be afflicted by a hyper-sensitiveness and a social timidity which, striking against the surfaces of the world, recoils into private contemplation. Sociability—that is, facility in taking on the gestures and armor of herd intercourse—is a special talent which some of the poets have possessed and some have lacked, like red hair or blue eyes, quite unsynthesized with their subtler psychological distinctions.

A second facet of the social attitudes of the poets is their snobbery or lack of it. Do they see all people as equally

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interesting human beings, or do they tend to divide them into classes, while themselves enjoying an appropriate "inferiority" or "superiority" complex according to their own supposed station? And has their snobbery, where it existed, run along social or intellectual lines? Here one generalization is possible: with two exceptions—Donne and Landor—no great or near great poet has been in philosophy or practice a social snob; though several—notably Pope and Whitman, possibly also Milton and Keats—have had their ultimate social attitude colored or even directed by a sense of social inferiority in early youth. On the other hand all poets have been intellectual snobs, with a healthy scorn alike for the ignorant and the convention-stiffened philistine.

Finally, in considering the social relationships of the poets we come on the question of their personal ones, their friendships, the number of them, their depth or shallowness, and the behavior of the poets in prosecuting them, their loyalty and generosity, or their disloyalty and close self-protection.

Such evidence as there is points to Chaucer as a shy man in general company but intensely attached to a few congenial friends. Gower seems to have been one of these, for when Chaucer was sent on a diplomatic mission to Lombardy in 1378 he left Gower as one of his agents to represent him in his absence. It implied a warm nature in Chaucer to have evoked that devoted elegiac cry of his pupil, Occleve—"O maystir, maystir, God thy soule reste!"

Throughout his life Spenser remained devoted to Harvey, the astrologer, whom he met in Cambridge, who induced him to come to London, and who introduced him to Sidney. Spenser's friendship with the latter may have been colored by his useful patronage. Living in Ireland from the time he was twenty-eight, he became intimate with Raleigh who occupied the adjoining estate, introduced him in *Colin Clout* as the "shepherd of the ocean," and prefixed a letter to him in the *Faerie Queene*.

Sidney was not much for court gaiety, but preferred the society of Dyer, Spenser, Greville and other poets in the Areopagus, the literary club of which Sidney was president. Generally he sought out the high-brows of Europe, was

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intimate with the much older Lanquet, in Vienna, and with Tintoretto (who painted him) in Verona. Spenser dedicated the *Shepherd's Calendar* to him. The devotion to him of Fulke Greville—Lord Brooke—was among the great romantic friendships in literary history. Greville wrote for his own epitaph: ". . . servant to Queen Elizabeth, counsellor to King James, friend to Sir Philip Sidney."

Daniel was a popular figure with the Elizabethan intellectuals, his intimates including Doctor Crowell, Doctor Campden, Shakespeare, Marlowe and Chapman.

A specially close quaternion, at one time, seems to have been Chapman, Spenser, Shakespeare and Jonson; another Greene, Marlowe, Lodge and Peele.

Shakespeare undoubtedly was acquainted with court circles and probably had real friends there, but the evidence is against his having been on the whole a gregarious person. By the time he was thirty he was intimate with the Earl of Southampton, who gave him £1000 "to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to." Southampton was one of the brilliant company around the Earl of Essex, and may well have introduced Shakespeare there. (Incidentally the sonnets were begun at about the same time.) But a more significant sketch of Shakespeare comes, via Aubrey, from his fellow-actor, William Beeston. Beeston declared that he was "the more to be admired q(uod) he was not a company keeper, lived in Shoreditch, wouldn't be debauched, & if invited to court; he was in paine." Augustine Phillips, a member of his company, liked him well enough to leave him a small legacy in 1605, and in his own will he remembered Richard Burbage and others. If Shakespeare had any snobbery it was of a wholesome, rustic variety, pertinent to his rise in the little world of his own home-town. If he enjoyed court society for a while, his head was surely not turned by it, and his personal devotion remained with the poets and the stage "fellows" of his own calling. Pre-eminent among these was Ben Jonson, who was drinking with him, in his retirement in Stratford, when he caught the fever that carried him off, and who, while criticizing his art, told Drummond afterward that he was

“honest and of an open and free nature” and “I loved the man and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any.” A quiet, possibly a timid, man, probably a little forbidding in his sensitive integrity that baffled mockery and commanded from cruder souls a sort of protective reverence. For Jonson was no sentimentalist, but a very hard-boiled man of the rough-and-tumble world.

After James made Jonson laureate, he grew very social and travelled much with the aristocracy, while frequenting the Mermaid Tavern. He outlived James and all his contemporaries and ended ruling alone over a crowd of young London hacks and university students—“the tribe of Ben”—at the Devil Tavern. Charles neglected him and he gradually sank into squalor, but when one of his pensions was at last restored he had himself gorgeously dressed and carried to the Devil, gave his last great supper there, was carried home, and never left his bed.

Among the “Sons of Ben” were Herrick, Randolph and Cartwright. The last was especially beloved by Jonson and by all and sundry. When he died at thirty-two the King (Charles I) went into mourning.

Beaumont and Fletcher lived together, drank together in taverns, shared the same clothes and the same mistress.

Donne was first of all a snob, an intellectual snob who fled bores rudely, an intellectual and social snob who frankly addressed only the quality in his sermons, a social snob who courted and cajoled the great all through his life. Although included in the group that centered around Christopher Brooke—including at different times Jonson, Selden, Drayton, Browne, Wither, Davies, Cotton, Inigo Jones and many others—he stood haughtily aloof from all the Elizabethan-Jacobean writers except Jonson, who alone among them was not sweet and simpering. He was the innovator of the rough, intellectual style, and wrote alone. Jonson admired him as “the best living critic of poetry” and sent him his epigrams to revise albeit “for not keeping accent he deserved hanging.” But within the narrow limits of his arrogant discrimination Donne was a “great and passionate friend,” and he called friendship his “second religion.” The Brookes were

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his best friends, and later Izaak Walton his biographer. Lord Doncaster—whom Donne accompanied on his Bohemian embassy—was always devoted to him, and in 1622 sent him a tun of claret from Bordeaux with the message, “Love me still, and reserve this tun of wine against your Michaelmas hospitality, where I mean to be.” In 1625, when he had fled plague-infested London and was living with Sir John Danvers, he became intimate with George Herbert, then twenty-eight, and probably was responsible for his sudden conversion from profligacy and his taking of orders. Making all allowance for the extreme poverty of the central period of Donne’s life, it is yet apparent that he was never greatly troubled by impulses of financial generosity. In his final comfortable circumstances as Dean of St. Paul’s, he did help some of his friends who had helped him before; and his father-in-law, Sir George More, being much reduced, Donne did voluntarily forgive him the principal and interest of a long-outstanding dower-bond. But these were no more than social gestures fitting a gentleman and involving no element of sacrifice. Intellectually and socially Donne was a snob and indifferent to the concerns of the mass of humanity below his station. And there is nothing in the record to imply that his financial generosity ever outran his intellectual and social intolerance.

Milton stands as the arch-Puritan poet in whom spontaneous affection was crushed under moral purpose. As a boy he had at least one friend, young Gill, son of the master of St. Paul’s, with whom Milton exchanged Greek, Latin and English verses. Edward King of *Lycidas* was only a college acquaintance with whom he was never intimate. At thirty, projecting some great work, then nebulous, Milton concluded that he who would do well in poetry must himself be “a true poem”—that is, a true Puritan poem—embodiment none but intellectual emotion; and so his association thereafter became mostly intellectual and official. While he was Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth the Parliament allowed him a “weekly table” at which to entertain foreign ministers and men of learning. But he seems to have made no personal friends either among them or the high mem-

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bers of the government, with whom he was constantly working. "I keep very much to my own house, and prefer to do so." Yet for all this austere intellectual exterior Pattison thinks that Milton was acutely sensitive and always yearning for love and sympathy. During his secretariat he kept, about once a month, a "gawdy-day" with "two gentlemen at Gray's Inn," and it appears that with children, disciples, and the alumni of the school he ran, he was affable, gay and cheerful. He maintained always a personal and passionate attachment to the memory of Galileo, whom he met in Italy, old, imprisoned and blind, a life-long impression that was strongly imprinted on *Paradise Lost*. His relationship with Charles Diodati, the physician practicing in Rome, son of a dissenting pastor of Geneva, was lasting and affectionate on both sides, and on Diodati's death Milton wrote for him a passionate elegy in Latin which far surpassed *Lycidas* for tenderness. There is the story of Milton having saved Davenant from execution after he was taken prisoner by the Puritan army, and of Davenant, in return, seeing to it, at the Restoration, that Milton's name was struck from the list of those to be excepted from the Act of Oblivion. And there is no doubt of the genuine friendship with Marvell, whom Milton got appointed his assistant as his blindness came on. All in all, Milton was no monster, but a poet, sensitive, aware of the truth he carried in him, a great subjective poet strait-jacketed in an intellectual system, which compression heightened at least his rhetorical powers.

Our picture of Marvell as a social creature is a little distorted, not, as in the case of Milton, by austerity but by the suspicion of time-serving and, at least in principle, of personal disloyalty. Outside the evidence of the *Ode*, Marvell is known to have been Cromwell's friend and admirer. On the death of the Protector, he and Milton were each voted six yards of mourning by the Council and Marvell assisted at the gorgeous pomp of Cromwell's burial in the Abbey; yet within two years he was a member of the Restoration Parliament that voted his remains exhumed, hanged, beheaded, and the body buried under the gallows. Color is added to this aspect of Marvell's memory by the fact that,

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though he loved wine, he would drink but little in company, saying that he would not play the good fellow in any man's company in whose hands he would not trust his life. Apparently a calculating little man. Yet it must be remembered that those were calculating days, that Marvell, as an M.P., was always facing proscription by one side or the other, that though he admired Cromwell, he was never, even during the Protectorate, a Puritan by conviction, that after all Cromwell was dead at the time of his dishonor, and that we do not know that Marvell voted for the exhumation. Altogether Marvell's political astuteness was remarkable, and we must admire the straddling tactics by which he seems to have maintained friendships with individuals in both parties. The fact probably was that he was more buffoon than statesman and liked people not causes. There was something amicably substantial in a man who, in a period of violent factiousness, maintained the warm friendship of such opposed types as Lovelace and Dryden, Prince Rupert and Harrington and Milton, and who had no place to seek or political axe to grind with any of them beyond the preservation of his own head; and his devotion to Milton was so disinterested that his intention to write his biography was thwarted only by his own death. When his personal standards were violated he became consistent and "choleric" enough. Toward the end of his life he despised Charles II and said so in vitriolic and signed satires that would have cost most men at least their ears. Yet Prince Rupert remained his intimate friend and Charles was said to be one of his most amused readers.

Butler in his youth was the intimate of Selden and of Samuel Cooper, the miniature painter.

Waller, frequenter of all the courts from James I through James II, was a flatterer whose company was made acceptable by his famous wit "where his spirit was odious." Clarendon says that Waller was introduced to the wits of the age by Doctor Morley, a "son of Ben Jonson." There is on record, however, an anecdote that he was already of their number when, one evening, "hearing a noise in the street and enquiring the cause, they found . . . Morley . . .

under arrest, whom Waller set free at the expense of £100, took him to the country as director of his studies, and then procured him admission into the company of the friends of literature."

Cowley, having served the court in France all during the Commonwealth and having, at the Restoration, failed of deserved preferment, turned in "melancholy" from society and was for bucolic solitude. He retired into Surrey where the Earl of St. Albans and the Duke of Buckingham got him granted a lease of sufficient of the Queen's lands to afford him ample income. Hence, after seven years' trial of pastoral delight, upon returning from somewhere, he wrote thus to his old crony and future biographer, Dean Sprat of Westminster: "The first night made me keep my chamber ten days. And, two days after, had such a bruise on my ribs from a fall, that I am yet unable to move or turn myself in my bed. This is my personal fortune here to begin with. And, besides, I can get no money from my tenants, and have my meadows eaten every night by cattle put in by my neighbors. What this signifies, or may come to in time, God knows; if it be ominous, it can end in nothing less than hanging. Another misfortune has been, and stranger than all the rest, that you have broke your word with me, and failed to come, . . . I do hope to recover my late hurt so far within five or six days (though it be uncertain yet whether I shall ever recover it) so as to walk about again. And then, methinks, you and I . . . might be very merry upon St. Anne's Hill, . . ." And, alas, the convivial Dean not only came but came again and yet again. For it was this same eminent and congenial pair who, only two years later, got so drunk at a neighbor's that on the way home they lapsed in the fields and spent the damp, chilly night there, wherefrom Cowley caught the "fever" that carried him off.

The Duke of Ormond made Roscommon captain of the guards in Ireland. One night, returning from a gambling party, he was attacked by three hired assassins. He killed one, a stranger passing disarmed a second, and the third fled. The stranger turned out to be a down-at-heel gentleman,

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and Roscommon took him to the Duke of Ormond and insisted upon resigning his commission in his favor. The stranger held the post for three years, then died; and Roscommon resumed it.

The friendship of Addison and Steele was one of the great ones in literature. It began when they were in school together in the Chartreux and lasted until they quarrelled over the Peerage Bill in 1719, and Addison died soon thereafter, without a reconciliation. Addison was dominant in the friendship and was often arrogant and sarcastic, but Steele always deferred to him, even after Addison took out an execution against him for £100 owing. The cases of Addison's famous modesty and generosity all seem to associate themselves either with some advantage to be gained or with a prudent withholding of his name—a common practice of his—from some enterprise until it should be determined whether the event was to be profitable or not. One Budget, "the man who calls me cousin," supplied Addison with a very bad epilogue for Ambrose Phillips' *The Distressed Mother*. Addison wrote the famous one and when he heard that, through a misunderstanding, it was being printed over his name, he went to the printer's early in the morning, stopped the presses and the distribution and had Budget's name substituted, that it might help Budget in a suit for some place he was then prosecuting. He had intended to dedicate his published *Cato* to his friend Tickell, when the Queen requested it. Thus torn between honor and duty he very decently published the play without any dedication. When he was Secretary of State he made Tickell his Under Secretary, later named him his literary executor, and Tickell reciprocated with the famous elegy.

Prior was friendly with all and sundry. Louis XIV subjoined to a letter he was sending by Prior to Queen Anne: "I shall expect with impatience the return of Mr. Prior, whose conduct is very agreeable to me." He remained a great favorite of Lord Dorset—who gave him his education—and Prior wrote a character of him. But on leaving the noble company of Dorset, Oxford, Bolingbroke and the like, Prior habitually went to have a pipe and ale with a soldier

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and his wife in Longacre. His friends in high circles adhered to him in his poverty after he lost his job, subscribing £4000 for the big folio of his poems, in addition to other favors.

With Mallet "self-aggrandizement was his only steady and ruling passion." He was always a schemer, a climber, and a social snob. Yet he was intimate with Pope, Garrick, Young and many others, and he collaborated with Thomson in the masque *Alfred*. He made what must have been a very ominous break in rushing to Pope one day with the glad report that the newly published, anonymous *Essay on Man* was no good. "I wrote it," said Pope.

In his early twenties Swift was friendly with King William, who, when he had gout, used to visit Swift's patron, Sir William Temple, and would show the youth "how to cut asparagus in the Dutch way." Swift always disliked Dryden because the older man, seeing some of his early verse, had said: "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." The Dean was in fact a "steady, inflexible friend," but he was always harsh and alienating in his frequent acts of generosity, having a theory that kindness done with the prospect of gratitude or friendship was not generous at all. He was specially rough and peevish with servants, both his own and others', and once when he dined alone with Lord Orrery said of one who waited on them, "That man has, since we sat to the table, committed fifteen faults." Harsh as he was, Swift kept a "public table" two days a week until the death of Stella. Then his benevolence was contracted, and his severity exasperated; he drove his acquaintance from his table, and wondered why he was deserted.

Edmund Smith was surely the filthiest and probably the most popular of the wits of Queen Anne's reign. With a bastard's indifference to the conventions, he was an affectionate and loyal, as he was as endlessly entertaining, old dog, nicknamed "Captain Rag," who looked for no happiness except in friendship. For his play *Phædra* he obtained the unusual distinction of a prologue by Addison, the chief literary figure identified with the Whigs, and an epilogue

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by Prior, who stood in the same position with respect to the Tories.

Of John Phillips "it is related, that, when he was at school, he seldom mingled in play with the other boys, but retired to his chamber; where his sovereign pleasure was to sit, hour after hour, while his hair was combed by somebody. . . ." In spite of this somewhat unhealthy practice he was said to have "endeared himself to his schoolfellows."

Pope's relations with his intimates were an inextricable tangle of intrigue, suspicion, hatred, need of affection, sentimental gratitude and straightforward loyalty, all equally passionate and complicated together like his "crazy" little "carcass." As a youth he fawned shamelessly upon much older men—notably Walsh, Henry Cromwell and Wycherly—following them around like a puppy until they had well introduced him into the literary world, then dropped them. He early became a member of Swift's, as opposed to Addison's, "little senate," "The Scribbler's Club"—Swift, Pope, Atterbury, Doctor Arbuthnot, Gay and Parnell; and but for the painful duping of Swift in the matter of the publication of his letters, Pope remained always devoted and loyal to these. But for his intimates next outside this circle Pope was a dangerous friend, always quick to find an insult in some harmless remark, brooding over it long while remaining affable, and finally discharging his spleen unexpectedly and witheringly in the public prints. He could be equally excessive in gratitude. When Warburton, previously his enemy, came unexpectedly to the defence of the much beleaguered *Essay on Man*, he hailed him as his closest friend, strove hopelessly to effect a constitutionally impossible friendship between him and Bolingbroke, refused an honorary degree from Oxford because the University proposed to confer a lesser degree on Warburton, and by his will left him all his copyrights. Pope was consistently generous to aspiring literary people—so long as they did not endanger his own importance. He loaned the unknown Dodsley £100 to set up as a publisher and seldom failed to respond to a subscription for publication by a new author. Alone of the

subscribers to the allowance settled upon the feckless Savage, he kept up his £20 a year, in spite of Savage's arrogant ingratitude and groundless charges against his benefactors. Pope was always kind to his servants and made personal friends of them. His last days and death were a pathetic orgy of affection.

Gay was insolent, good-humored and psychologically dependent, a favorite with the great and treated with more affection than respect. He dedicated his first poem, *Rural Sports*, to Pope, and won thereby Pope's lifelong friendship. When through foolish investment he lost some £20,000 that had been given him, he collapsed almost mortally and Pope nursed him back to life with the utmost tenderness. Upon the failure of his *Three Hours after Marriage*, in which Pope and Arbuthnot had collaborated with him to some extent, he took "all the shame on himself," lest his friends be disgraced. Again he sank into a decline, and his friends rushed forward. The Earl of Burlington sent him into Devon; Putney took him to Aix; Lord Harcourt installed him in his country seat where, during Gay's visit, two rustic lovers were killed by lightning.

Savage was a charmer and had a vast acquaintance, though few permanent friends, being, like Pope, quick to turn against any one upon some fancied offence to his pride. Being always in poverty, he felt the world obligated to allay it without condescension. He habitually solicited small sums from his friends and took either a refusal or a request to repay as a personal affront. And when he turned against a friend he at once lampooned him and betrayed his secrets. Thus his old friends were always drifting away from him, but he was always replacing them with new ones in a life-long parade. The people of the theatre liked him and supported him for several years, especially the actress, Mrs. Oldfield, who paid him a pension of £50—though he never saw her alone—and on her death he wore mourning. He was long intimate with Steele, who once asked him with an air of great import to come very early to his house the next morning. Upon his appearance, Steele was waiting with a "chariot" at the door, bade Savage enter, and had the coachman

drive hurriedly to an obscure tavern at Hyde Park Corner, where, still without any explanation, they retired to a private room. Steele then began to dictate a pamphlet to Savage, which labor, broken only by a pause to consume a remarkably mean dinner, occupied them till late afternoon. Steele then explained that he had retired here to escape his creditors, that he had no money to pay for the dinner, and that Savage must go out and peddle the pamphlet before he could leave the place. This Savage proceeded to do, getting at last two guineas for it, which paid the check and left Steele a surplus to appease some of the claimants, who were waiting at his house. Steele at this time purposed to marry Savage to a natural daughter of his on whom he would settle £1000. But he failed to produce the money, grew dilatory, Savage ridiculed him, Steele heard of it and excluded him from his house. Savage's friendship with Pope —begun when he acted as stool-pigeon for him in gathering material for the *Dunciad*—continued to the end of his life—a remarkable instance of Pope's capacity for generosity and forbearance when his own pre-eminence was not questioned. In his last months in Newgate Prison Savage was immensely popular with the warden and the prisoners alike, being, as he had always been, utterly generous to any one who was even more wretchedly situated than himself. This generosity and compassion were shown early in tangible and spectacular form in the case of the whore who, in his trial for murder, had testified against him, maliciously, probably perjuriously and almost fatally. Shortly after his pardon and release he met her on the street and she dunned him. Savage's entire wealth at the time was a guinea which he had in his pocket. This he changed and divided with her.

Young outlived most of his acquaintances and finally could think of only two friends to name in his will, his housekeeper and his hatter.

Thomson was much beloved and after he made his reputation stuck to his early friends. He and Savage were boon companions. Pope wrote the prologue to his tragedy *Sophonisba* and supplied a whole passage of description in *Autumn*. After Thomson's death the actor Quin spoke the

prologue to his posthumous play *Coriolanus*, their long-standing friendship having begun when Quin had delivered Thomson—"then known to him only for his genius"—from arrest "by a very considerable present."

Gray never loved a woman, but he was a fine friend. Wharton presented him with a sow in 1760, when he was living in Bloomsbury. But, with the exception of Mason, his biographer, his close friends were not writers, and he and Doctor Johnson were mutually repellent to each other. His two life-long friendships, both begun at Eton, were with Horace Walpole and West, the latter's death eliciting his first famous poem—the sonnet ending, "And weep the more because I weep in vain"—and undoubtedly contributing to his chronic melancholy. His friendship with the vivacious and rich Walpole was broken—supposedly on account of the latter's condescension—during their post-Cambridge tour of France; but it was mended in 1744, after which Walpole gave him abject homage, though Gray remained always a little stiff with him. Besides being temperamentally finicky, Gray had extremely low vitality, and was sensitive to company, verging from very low to very high spirits according as he liked those present or not. He was tortured by gaiety, and took on a supercilious and affected air in the presence of lively people. At Cambridge he dined alone—contrary to the custom—and generally was difficult of access; after he was famous, the undergraduates used to gather at points he was known to pass, in order to get a glimpse of him. He lived a while with Harriet Speed, Lady Ailesbury, and Lady Carlisle, all very sprightly, and wrote complaining pitifully of their endless activity, "what they call *doing something*, in a situation where one might sit still, and be alone with pleasure." Later he told Walpole that once on a picnic he said nothing all evening except, "Yes, my lady, I believe so." Walpole once arranged a meeting at dinner between Hogarth and Gray. Hogarth was "more surly and egotistical than usual, and Gray was plunged in one of his fits of melancholy reserve, so that Walpole had to rely entirely upon his own flow of spirits to prevent absolute silence." At fifty-four Gray contracted a violent attachment

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for one Bonstetter, a young Swiss attending Cambridge, who probably referred to him in his later statement that in England the most intimate friendship could exist between people who were absolutely silent in each other's presence. He was much distressed at Cambridge by a three days' siege on him by Lord Nunham, a young æsthete and blood about town who presented him with a bunch of jonquils, and whose wig, as Gray noticed when he was kneeling making the presentation, was scented with jasmine. Upon his being presented with the chair of Modern Literature and Modern Languages at Cambridge, he was summoned to kiss the hand of George III, and the King made several complimentary remarks to him an account of which his friends afterwards demanded; but Gray replied that the room was so hot and he so embarrassed, that he did not know what the King said.

Thomas Warton often visited his brother's school and when there was always a great pal with the boys. On one occasion he was stealing food with some of them in the kitchen when a master entered and pulled the venerable professor by the leg from under the table where he had hidden.

Cowper, although without any force, had personal magnetism and the faculty of winning friends, being mild, full of gratitude and cheerfulness and devoid of irritability, suspicion and egotism. While a young lawyer, given to popular, patriotic ballads, he was a member of a literary set which included Churchill and Coleman. After his madness appeared he cut off all his friends except one Hill, who continued to act as his lawyer. After the success of *The Task*, when he was fifty, his friends returned, and he was sociable and happy again.

Crabbe in his social relations was rustic, tactless, crotchety, literal, unimaginative and intolerant, especially with his parishioners. But Burke, responding to his wholly unintroduced appeal when he was down and out, found that he "had the mind and feelings of a gentleman," and established him in his house. After Crabbe's wife came into money he returned to his native village, where he now saw only the gentry and was disliked by the villagers. Later, in his

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living at Munstин, though he always assiduously attended the sick and the poor, he was again unpopular, and when he went to another parish, the bells of Munstин rang to welcome his successor before he had left the village. In the new parish of Woodbridge he fared no better, for he was stiff and conservative and the people preferred the evangelical curate who had preceded him. When he took the wrong side in an election he was almost mobbed. But he was courageous and kindly in deed and ultimately won their affection. Rogers, that great lionizer, induced him in 1817 (aged sixty-three) to visit London and enjoy his literary reputation. So he sat for his portrait, hobnobbed with Rogers, Fox, Campbell, Kemble, Murray, Moore, Wordsworth and Southey, and generally had a vague, high old time. He had a genuine friendship with Scott which began in 1809 when he sent him *The Parish Register*, and continued till they both died in the same year, 1832. He visited Scott in 1822, arriving at the house while Sir Walter was away acting as master of ceremonies at the reception of George IV, then visiting Edinburgh, on progress. Scott, having secreted the glass in which the King had drunk his health, returned home to find Crabbe awaiting him, forgot the glass and sat on it. The next morning the inept Crabbe mistook a gathering of kilted Scotchmen in the house for foreigners of some kind and so addressed them in bad French, and they, taking him for a Frenchman, replied in the same.

In his late 'teens Blake became one of a "blue-stocking" group which met in a bizarre room of the Reverend Henry Matthews. The windows were painted in imitation of stained glass, the walls decorated "with models in putty and sand" of gothic figures in niches, and the furniture was entirely "ornamented to accord with the appearance of that of antiquity." Here Blake on at least one occasion sang his early poems, "while musical professors eagerly noted down the airs," and Matthews and Flaxman got them privately printed. But Blake, always quick-tempered, and sensitive to patronizing, eventually quarrelled with the group. Subsequently the great Hayley acted, in all superficial things, the friend to Blake, setting him up at Felpham, and fur

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nishing him with profitable employment. But he unwisely tried to manage Blake's life, who, after three years, lost his temper, relented enough to agree that friendship should continue, and so departed. The turn-out of the whole village of Felpham to testify in his favor at his trial for sedition argues his general popularity.

Burns, later beloved by everybody, high and low, said that "In my early years I was by no means a favorite with anybody."

Rogers was generous in helping needy talent and was the friend of every famous man of his time, becoming so by means of the celebrated breakfast parties of from four to six persons which he held almost daily.

Although there is no evidence that Wordsworth after his enthusiastic youth was ever of much use to anybody spiritually, yet financially he was generous, especially during the years of his own poverty. At Dove Cottage, Grasmere, he and Dorothy were forever sharing what little food and money they had with passing wayfarers; and once when a farmer and his wife were lost and perished in a snowstorm on the fells, Wordsworth took in one of the daughters and was active in raising money to support the rest of the family. But on the other hand, when Godwin in 1822 was on the point of being sold out to his creditors and a fund was started for him, to which Lamb, Crabb Robinson, Byron and Scott contributed, Wordsworth refused to subscribe. The inference is that, while generous enough to inferiors who would be duly grateful, Wordsworth was indifferent to an equal, however needy, especially an arrogant equal like Godwin from whom no gratitude was to be expected. Wordsworth was not natively cold. There is no reason to suspect Dorothy of utter fatuity when she wrote of him when he was twenty-three: "William has a sort of violence . . . which demonstrates itself every day, where the objects of his affections are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes . . . a sort of restless watchfulness . . . , a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manners as I have observed in few men." Between this time and 1800 something happened in Words-

worth, something that was at least coextensive with two separate series of events, the dissolution of the relationship with Annette Vallon and the disillusionizing of his utopian hopes of the French Revolution. By 1800 the glaciation had set in and Wordsworth the enthusiast was gradually overwhelmed by Wordsworth the intellect, with all the latter's unattractive accompaniments of priggishness and messianic aloofness. The pattern of human life continued in his clear mind; he could still write kindly and wisely to young De-Quincey who, as a stranger, had approached him: "My friendship is not in my power to give. This is a gift which no man can make; it is not in our power. It will spring up and thrive like a wild flower when these favor, and when they do not, it is in vain to look for it." Meanwhile, he did have a "sound and healthy friendship," the result of long growth; and he was, *in action*, strangling it and helping to destroy a selfless, devoted and highly talented friend. Coleridge and Wordsworth probably met in 1793, and by 1800 they had a complete understanding, perfectly frank in the most intimate details, and the utmost affection on both sides. The intimacy is immortalized in a thousand anecdotes in Dorothy's *Journals*, for which there is no space here—and is incidentally carved in stone on the "rock of names," originally on the road between their homes, where the inner circle cut their initials together—"W. W." "M. H." "D. W." "S. T. C." "J. W." and "S. H."—Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy, Coleridge, John Wordsworth and Sara Hutchinson —(the rock was damaged when moved to higher ground when Grasmere Lake was made a reservoir, but some of the initials remain). From 1802 on, Coleridge was deteriorating in will power and consistency and there is plenty of evidence in his contemporary letters that Wordsworth was deeply moved by his friend's decay. The reports of Coleridge's trip to Malta, which he had helped to finance, certainly contributed to his aging suddenly at thirty-five. But here, as in the case of his liberalism and his passion for Annette Vallon, there came a limit beyond which his intellect stiffened and his emotional nature, though still involved, surrendered control to conventional common sense. There is no

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doubt that Coleridge in 1810 was an obnoxious guest at Dove Cottage, invalided as he was, spending most of his day in bed, lying about the work he was not doing, making the most exhausting demands on Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth's sister-in-law, and Dorothy. One day Basil Montagu came by, purposing to take Coleridge with him to London, and Wordsworth told him that Coleridge would be a "troublesome guest." Later, in London, Montagu, in a moment of "imprudent exasperation," passed the remark on to Coleridge and led him to believe that Wordsworth had commissioned Montagu to tell him that Wordsworth had lost all faith in him, that he was *persona non grata* in Wordsworth's house. Meanwhile the Wordsworths wondered why Coleridge didn't write and when they heard, indirectly, they were all "miserable." But *Wordsworth wrote Coleridge no explanation*, and that was to admit to the sensitive Coleridge that his assumption was correct and that Wordsworth, the admiration of his life, had thrown him out in the spiritual gutter. A year later, in 1811, when Wordsworth's boy died, Coleridge wrote him a warm letter looking to a reconciliation, but the great man replied with cold propriety—this being at a time, in Fausset's opinion, when a word from Wordsworth might have steadied Coleridge permanently. In 1812 Wordsworth wrote Mrs. Clarkson, a mutual friend, that he was coming to London "with a determination to confront Coleridge and Montagu upon this vile business," the tone of the letter being harsh and self-righteous. He did come and saw Coleridge several times. But, according to Coleridge's later statement, Wordsworth gave him no affection and the breach was never really healed. Agreeing that Coleridge was, during all of this time, inconsequential, snivelling, feebly deceptive, almost idiotic—plenty of reason to turn against an acquaintance even of moderately long standing; yet Coleridge had, for fifteen years, been Wordsworth's one, peculiar and only intimate friend, unswervingly loyal, and many a time had given Wordsworth the push he needed over some emotional or intellectual hill. Wordsworth's failure with Coleridge was his final failure as a "human," social being. His affection for his sailor brother, John, who

went down with his ship in 1804, was genuine and unre-served, and the loss affected William deeply, driving him somewhat out into the world; but John had never rivalled him in any way, had given him nothing but abject devotion and had never made any demand upon his tolerance or generosity. So much for Wordsworth the friend. The pic-ture of him in general society does not thaw the ice. Once in 1817 Crabb Robinson spent an evening at Lamb's, where he "found a large party collected around the two poets," Wordsworth and Coleridge—"but Coleridge had the larger number." There was the famous dinner at Haydon's in 1817 when "Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty; and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the intervals of Lear's passion. . . . 'Now,' said Lamb, 'you old lake poet, you rascally lake poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?' . . . , etc., etc." It was about this time that Haydon took Keats to see Wordsworth in the latter's rooms and the older man, after hearing the boy pace up and down the room reciting *The Hymn to Pan*, chilled him with the comment, "a very pretty piece of paganism." Shortly there-after Keats called on Wordsworth again. When Keats arrived Wordsworth kept him waiting a long time, then entered in full regalia—knee-breeches, silk stockings, silver buckles, etc.—and was "in a great hurry as he was going to dine with the Commissioner of Stamps," Wordsworth being at that time Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland County and the Commissioner being the unhappy Kingston who had begged of Lamb an invitation to Haydon's dinner and there, being out of his element, had been cruelly baited. A year later Keats, passing through Rydal, called on Wordsworth and found him out electioneering, to Keats's disgust at his having gone conservative. He wrote to his brothers, "I am sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression wherever he visited in town by his egotism, vanity and bigotry." Much later Elizabeth Barrett, meeting Wordsworth for the first time, added her similar testimony—"He was very kind to me and let me hear his conversation." During his last ten years Wordsworth often went to London and became ac-

quainted with most of the eminent personages of the time, sitting at dinner parties, in Carlyle's phrase, "with a rock-like indifference to the babble." And at the end we see him the saint of Rydal Mount, beset with ladies, disciples and pilgrims, sometimes reciting to strangers, sometimes slipping away to the comforting hearth of Miss Fenwick. In 1832 Pickersgill came to paint his portrait and Dora recorded: "The garret was our studio . . . and here we received all our company, whomsoever they might be, Mr. Pickersgill not caring how full the room was." During this official period Elizabeth Barrett gives, in her way, another glimpse of the laureate: "Wordsworth is in London, having been commanded up to the Queen's ball. He went in Rogers' court dress. . . ."

The impression I have tried to give of Wordsworth in his social aspect carries on the reverse the image of Coleridge, contrasted in every detail—devoted and selfless, loyal in great things and irresponsible in trifles, friendship being almost the only expression his personality found that was altogether simple, healthy and uncomplicated. Coleridge "needed sympathy as he needed laudanum—it was physically medicine to him." All his life he must lean on somebody, not only financially, but spiritually—Southey, Lamb, Poole, even the wretched neurotic Lloyd, the Wedgwoods, Dorothy Wordsworth, the two Hutchinson girls, Montagu, the Gilmans and many others; and of these Wordsworth was, and remained always, "the Giant, . . . the only man to whom *at all times and in all modes of excellence* I feel myself inferior." The enthusiasm with which he threw himself into this intimacy is recorded in Dorothy's transcript of his first visit to Racedown in 1797. He had not met Wordsworth and walked over from Nether Stowey for that purpose. Recognizing William and Dorothy in a field, he "leapt over a gate, bounded down the pathless fields by which he cut off an angle," and introduced himself, "all fire and eagerness and disarray." They became "three people but one soul," and in 1806 when Coleridge, homesick in Malta, heard of the death of Wordsworth's sailor brother he "immediately fell down on the ground in 'a convulsive

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hysteric fit.’’ Then came the decay of Coleridge, the chilling of Wordsworth and the Montagu incident already mentioned when, in Fausset’s opinion, ‘‘while Coleridge had helped Wordsworth to realize his genius, Wordsworth at this time prevented Coleridge from recovering the remnants of his.’’ Coleridge remained faithful and made Wordsworth the hero of the *Biographia Literaria*, giving him sole credit for all the ideas they had worked out together; yet Wordsworth expressed no gratitude, nor defended the book when it was attacked. Finally, in 1818, in a letter to Thomas Allsop, Coleridge revealed his bitterness in a true summary of the relationship: ‘‘I have loved with enthusiastic self-oblivion those who have been so well pleased that I should, year after year, flow with a hundred nameless rills into *their* main stream, that they could find nothing but cold praise and effective discouragement of every attempt of mine to roll onward in a distinct current of my own; who *admitted* that the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Christabel*, the *Remorse*, and some pages of the *Friend* were not without merit, but were abundantly anxious to acquit their judgments of any blindness to the very numerous defects. Yet they *knew* that to *praise*, as mere praise, I was . . . constitutionally indifferent. In sympathy alone I found . . . nourishment and stimulus; and for sympathy alone did my heart crave.’’ Although nothing could fill the Wordsworthian void, Coleridge did find sympathy aplenty elsewhere, both intimately and in general society. Southey, like Wordsworth, quit Coleridge for his undependability in details, but Lamb was ‘‘at once human and freakish enough to love him all his days’’; Tom Poole never wholly let him down; and the Gilmans were heroic in their attentions. Coleridge was a popular prodigy at school, and during the dragoon adventure was a success with the soldiers for his stories. On his way to Germany in 1798, an intoxicated Danish fellow-passenger exclaimed: ‘‘Vat imagination! Vat language! Vat vast science! And vat eyes! Vat a milk-white forehead! O my heafen! Vy, you’re a Got!’’ Immediately thereafter in Germany he was immensely popular alike with students and the gentry and nobility. And from 1816 till his death in 1834 his Thursday

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evenings at the Gilmans were a social and intellectual institution. In the wide external sense Coleridge was a social success; but the shrine of his inner affections became a tomb where lay the great imperturbable mummy of Wordsworth. And in the case of a person as selfless and dependent as he, this may have been inevitable.

Although the practical-minded Southey was disgusted with Coleridge's pusillanimity, yet in the 1810's, when Coleridge was sinking lower and lower into opium and futility, Southey largely supported his family and helped Hartley through college.

Lamb was a devoted friend, beloved by all who knew him. It is surprising to find the savage quality of his intellectual snobbery, as revealed in the incident of Kingston, the Commissioner of Stamps, whom he brought to the famous Haydon dinner, and whose persecution he, being drunk, inaugurated as follows: "In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth, and begged I should procure him . . . an introduction. He told me he was a Comptroller of Stamps. . . . I thought it a liberty, but still . . . , " he had brought him. Whereupon the intellectual leaders of England proceeded to give the poor fellow what was probably the most wretched evening of his life, for which the heavily sedulous attentions of Wordsworth thereafter could hardly have been much compensation.

Tom Moore preferred high life to literary company and was a great success in it. He had "a cat-like disposition to curl himself up near something or somebody comfortable," but was a courageous bantam, and would put up with no condescension. He was badly touched with primness, which caused him to destroy the memoirs of his friend Byron, entrusted to him, and to give an apologetic coloring to his biography.

Byron was a sentimental friend. He said that friendships "were with me passions," and he sulked if addressed in a letter as "My dear" instead of "My dearest," or if his correspondent was sorry some one else had gone away. Four

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of his devoted school friends died early and he wrote, "I never could keep alive even a dog that liked me." John Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare, was his "earliest and dearest" friend whom he "always loved better than any (*male*) thing in the world." He once sent Murray, his publisher, a sprig of acacia and some rose leaves from Gibbon's garden. He loaned his friend Hodgson £1500 to marry on, and wrote in his own journal, "I wish there had been more convenience, and less gratification to my self-love in it, for then there had been more merit." Byron enjoyed for a time a great drawing-room popularity, but it meant little to him and he was glad to give it up when London turned against him. In society he always maintained a proud reserve, but afterwards with his friends his gaiety burst "like a boy let loose from school, and it seemed as though there was no extent of fun or tricks of which he was not capable." The histrionic element was noticeable in Byron's friendships, as in all his behavior. When he was seventeen he saved young Eddleston from drowning and immediately made him dramatically his friend, planning to live with him forever. Eddleston gave him a carnelian heart which Byron asked Elizabeth Pigot to keep for him, promptly forgot Eddleston, and never mentioned him again till he died, when he asked for the heart and found it broken—a bad omen.

Shelley considered himself as a "lone spirit" to whom the earth was not a home but a place of exile. He professed to hate society, which Mary Godwin required, and to love solitude, which Mary detested, and he did have a love for the expansive solitude of nature. Yet for humanity in its suffering generality he was perpetually solicitous, and so drew people around him in impersonal swarms, some truly in need, some frankly exploiting his naïveté, but all, with two or three exceptions, preying on him as unaffectionately as if he were a gold mine. Where Byron was personal and indifferent to any one not emotionally bound to him, Shelley's social attitude was all intellectual, and people were nothing to him but cases. He always emptied his pockets to beggars and when he was eighteen he was in a great dilemma whether his estate, when he should inherit it, should be

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divided among the inner circle of friends—then Hogg and Miss Hitchner—or among the wider circle of mankind. When he was living at Great Marlow, 1816–17, he held regular audiences for the poor villagers—in the midst of the post-war depression—to determine the worthiest objects of his considerable charities, while at the same time he was giving away great sums to his importunate friends, Godwin, Hunt, Clair Clairmont and her brother Charles. Because of his quick generosity, Shelley carried through life a whole world of other people's burdens, frequently without any return of personal affection. He was always ready to do the abstract good turn, by way of a loan of money, some burdensome practical favor, or a review with a puff of some needy acquaintance's book. But unlike Wordsworth, though equally generous and abstract in his personal approach, he assumed no superiority in his giving, and did not ask or expect in return either gratitude or conformance to his moral ideas. In the early part of his life his friendships seem indeed to have been spontaneous and personal. There was Hogg, who was expelled with him from Oxford, and who shortly thereafter tried to seduce Shelley's bride of a few weeks. But only a year later Shelley could bear the estrangement no longer, rushed into Hogg's lodgings and effected a reconciliation. There was Peacock, who from 1812, Shelley *aet.* twenty, remained one of his two or three intimate friends and the only wholly disinterested one. The relationship with Hunt partook of both natures. At the outset it was disinterested on Hunt's part, for when Hunt was jailed for sedition he refused the subscription which Shelley wanted to raise to pay his fine. Much later, however, when Hunt had lost his idealistic fight and was down and out, he did accept "loans" from Shelley at a time when the latter was so depleted that he had himself to borrow the money which he so cheerfully advanced. Shelley's friendship with Byron was a curious mixture on Shelley's part of intellectual respect, a congenial love of boating, disapproval of incest and of Byron's "vilest and most vulgar prejudices," and the opinion, perhaps intriguing to Shelley, that Byron was altogether "mad as the winds." But he bore the most burdensome crosses for Byron, shelter-

ing in England the unfortunate Clair Clairmont when Byron was in Italy and Shelley's own reputation was such that the world was sure to impute the pregnancy to him—a matter of the first importance at the time when he was in danger of losing his own children in Chancery. And afterwards in Italy it was Shelley who badgered Byron until he made some sort of provision for the silly girl and her poor little Allegra. Shelley and Keats had a little self-consciousness with each other, partly due to Keats's touchiness, partly because they honestly didn't like each other's poetry. Yet Shelley was thoroughly magnanimous, wrote to the *Quarterly* about their nasty review of the *Isabella* volume, and invited Keats to visit him in Italy—which Keats declined. The relationship with Godwin was the most Shelleyan and the most excruciating. It began in 1811 with intellectual adulation by Shelley and by 1812 Godwin was assuring his creditors that he could get funds from Shelley to settle his debts. Thereupon Shelley, himself penniless, began to go on the older man's notes giving post-obit bonds on the Shelley estate as security, and by 1814 had in addition contributed and raised between £2000 and £4000 to keep his spiritual mentor out of jail. After Shelley eloped with Godwin's daughter—in accordance with Godwin's theories—the latter was so outraged that he refused to see him, but wrote him insulting letters demanding large sums to appease his creditors. Shelley remonstrated gently against the insults and did his best to meet the demands. In 1817 Godwin so detested Shelley that he could not bear to hear his name pronounced and refused to see him, yet continued to solicit funds which Shelley continued to supply, all indirectly, through Shelley's publishers, by the use of fictitious names which preserved Godwin's "pride." By 1820 Shelley, being already half-ruined for Godwin's sake, and having a family to support, was flatly and curtly turning his father-in-law down, telling him to earn his own money. If Shelley had lived he might have begun to see people as they were, apart from their stark ideas or stark need. For three months in 1811-12 Shelley—recently expelled from Oxford and married—and Harriet were at Keswick, twelve miles from Wordsworth, and

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made quite a stir, being much entertained and meeting Mrs. Coleridge, the Southeys and Lovel; yet neither he nor Wordsworth looked up the other. Shelley seems indeed to have been naturally a social creature but with moral earnestness substituted for humor; and it is certain that one of the things that drove him from the Great Marlow house where he and Mary had entertained much, and so finally from England, was the need of peace from the relentless importunities of needy "friends." The one direction where Shelley's sociability could and did remain spontaneous was toward children, with whom he always played naturally, like one of them. He not only concerned himself with the practical needs of Byron's poor little bastard Allegra, but when the haughty father had put her away in the Convent of Bagna Cavollo in Florence, Shelley used to visit her there and "romped all over the convent" with her.

The *delicatesse* between Shelley and Keats was apparently more the latter's fault than the former's. On the surface of things "Keats, being a little too sensitive on the score of his origin, felt inclined to see in every man of birth a sort of enemy." Again, baronetcy or no baronetcy, Shelley was a man of means and stood financially at least in a potentially patronizing position to all of Hunt's circle, a condition to keep Keats's jealous independence always a little on the defensive. And besides, Shelley, though only three years older, was three years older in that important period of the early twenties when the seniority meant appreciable superiority in experience in the literary world; a period of life also when all idealism and intolerances are at their greatest intensity. But all of these reasons are in the realm of petty vanity and, I think, quite insufficient to explain Keats's self-conscious stiffness in this case, his display of something like an inferiority complex such as is evidenced nowhere else in his career. The real reason, I think, was that Keats was spiritually afraid of Shelley. It was not his superficial vanity that was invaded by the older man—Keats otherwise showed his superiority to that. It was his inmost poetic ego, his fundamental integrity, that was threatened. Shelley was a fanatical force, a great, abstract, humorless, impersonal force,

like one of his own demons, a force all the more malign in that it was benevolent and exercised in terms of the disarming courtesy of a gentleman. Keats, on the other hand, had small traffic in intellectual abstractions. He was concrete and sensitively personal in his reactions and relationships. Physically, he was not afraid of the devil. Morally, he was too big a man to be awed by a little rank or averse to receiving help, when needed, from people with whom he felt any *rapport*. But, personally, he was abnormally sensitive and generous, forever groping toward those around him, trying to establish contacts, trying to give himself and asking a corresponding response of spiritual curiosity and generosity in return. Here was a man close to him in mutual vocation and mutual friends, a man of great vitality, which he felt impinging upon him, but a sort of arid vitality like a desert wind not bodied forth specifically anywhere, bare of those tangible, personal tentacles to which Keats would have responded with his own until they gradually wove into a friendship. Here was a benign and bloodless green-eyed hurricane assaulting him but incapable of truly meeting him anywhere, incapable of doing anything to him except to confuse and divert his own personal sensibilities away from their natural bent. Keats was frightened. The immediate result was that he withdrew into his dignity. The secondary results were a personal aversion to this humorless "white flame," a dislike of the abstract blasts of poetry that blew unrestrained from it, and on the surface a surrender to the semblance of snobbish vanity that Haydon and Hunt recorded. Keats, always sound in his introspection, confessed to the real truth when, after declining Shelley's invitation to visit him at Great Marlow, he told Bailey that it was "in order that I might have my own unfettered scope." He stated the necessary corollary when, again declining Shelley's wholly gracious invitation to visit him in Pisa, he wrote his famous bit of advice, by way of criticism of the *Cenci*: "You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who

perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together." There is a sort of un-Keatsian harshness and hysteria in that, a sort of defiant counter-offensiveness in the expression that would not have appeared in a bit of adverse criticism directed to his real friends, Hunt or Peacock. It was not only in Shelley's poetry that he objected to that "magnanimity" and those powerful unfurled "wings." It was in Shelley's personality that he feared and fled them. There was here no personal tragedy, as in the case of Coleridge and Wordsworth, no helpless devotion on one side beating against an intellectual rock on the other. Keats was himself too rugged for that, and Shelley had, though in abstract terms, a fearless generosity such as Wordsworth never had or sedulously repressed. There was no tragedy here, but only another of those ironic cases of failure of easy friendship between the two chief poets of a period—Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, Tennyson and Browning. Each of these men was certainly above petty vanity as expressed in the jealousies and squabbles of the literary arena. But beneath the plane of vanity there was a realm of the inviolable ego. Each stood a little apart from the other, respectfully, avoiding the combat of too personal intimacy. For each felt, subconsciously, that the other, alone of his contemporaries could destroy him—Coleridge was too weak to turn away, and so wounded Wordsworth, and himself was killed. Or perhaps they felt instinctively that the arena was the world and the tournament to last through literary history. There was no time to be wasting their strength in the armored squabbles of criticism and current popularity, nor yet to jeopardize their lives in the more dangerous unarmored conflict of friendship. When Keats and Shelley bowed and passed in the night they were both young and unrecognized by the "Scotch Reviewers" in the imperial box. In purely personal terms it would have been interesting if their drama could have continued into old age, when each had cleared his part of the field and grown veteran to fame. For Keats and Shelley were both strong men as Coleridge was not, and each in his own way was open, honest and generous, as Tennyson was not always. Their ricochet from one

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another was in fact only a first meeting, an initial appraisal of each other's powers on the part, not of great men, but of great youths. Outside of the touchiness toward Shelley, Keats was the most generous and healthy friend among the great poets of whom the record is complete. He was intensely social in the personal sense, and was pathetically helpless in solitude, without somebody around with whom to exchange affection. When he went off alone to concentrate on the writing of *Endymion*, he floundered from Southampton to Newport to Carisbrooke to Margate, and in order to survive must send for little brother Tom to keep him company. His sensitiveness to people, and the basic reason for his fear of Shelley is explained in a letter to Woodhouse: "When I am in a room with people, if ever I am free from speculating on the creations of my own brain, then, not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me so that I am in a very little time annihilated . . ." But with people who returned a generosity equivalent to his own he was at joyful ease. The long record of his personal popularity runs from his earliest school days, when Clarke was his outstanding chum; through the period of medical school, when "he was always at the window peering into space so that the window-seat was spoken of by his comrades as Keats' place," and his extra-scholastic friendships were with the Matthews—he and young Matthew destined, as they believed, to be the Beaumont and Fletcher of their time—and the Wylies—Georgiana the future wife of his brother George; on into his early maturity and easy *entrée* into the "right gang" of young intellectuals, Hunt, Haydon, Peacock, Shelley, Haslam, Severn, Taylor his publisher, and scores of incidental acquaintances; and in his last years, both in and out of his professional coterie, the intimates whose relationship with him was wholly or principally on a personal basis—Dilke, Bailey, Reynolds, Brown and Woodhouse. In the early days—1816—Hunt's house in Hampstead was a favorite meeting place, and sonneteering competitions a favorite pastime. In December we see the *Grasshopper* and the *Critic* composed at Hunt's under these playful conditions. In 1817 there is a

glimpse of Keats in Oxford, with Bailey, where "For these last five or six days, we have had a boat on the Isis, and explored all the streams about, which are more in number than your eye-lashes. We sometimes skim into a bed of rushes, and there become naturalized river-folks—there is one particularly nice nest, which we have christened 'Reynolds' Cove,' in which we have read Wordsworth, and talked as may be." Later in the year Keats was present at the "immortal dinner" at Haydon's—which included Lamb, Wordsworth, Monkhouse, Ritchie and others, and the various collisions with Wordsworth occurred about this time. Early in 1818, again at Hunt's, the latter, Keats and Shelley wrote competitive sonnets on the Nile—to the small glory of Keats and Shelley!—Hunt won that time. A little earlier had occurred the incident of Cripps, a young painter whom Haydon had noticed in Oxford and had later asked Keats, while there with Bailey, to look up and invite to become Haydon's pupil. After Cripps had come to London Haydon unexpectedly demanded apprenticeship fees, and Keats spent a great deal of time—apparently unsuccessfully—trying to raise a subscription for him. The sentimental and conceited Haydon was the chief encourager of Keats's most serious weakness, the inability to refuse a loan. Haydon was always importuning him, and in 1819 we find Keats, himself broke, borrowing money from his publishers to advance to Haydon. The latter never repaid a penny, even in Keats's final want. About the time of the Cripps episode Keats's easy relations with his publisher, Taylor, appeared in the following facetious note he wrote, apparently trying to get Taylor out on some kind of a party—it does not appear whether the note did or did not persuade Taylor to come along: "To any friend who may call. Mr. Taylor's compts to any Ladies or gentlemen his friends who may call, and begs they will pardon him for being led away for an unavoidable entanglement, which will detain him till eleven o'clock tonight." While Keats lived Taylor remained his loyal and often a tried friend, on one occasion alienating himself from the powerful Mr. Blackwood on the poet's behalf. In the summer of 1818, Keats, probably already touched with tubercu-

losis, and the athletic Brown tramped Scotland together, Keats exhausting himself daily to keep up. They stopped at Burns's cottage, an event which Keats had anticipated warmly, but instead the gossipy old caretaker infuriated him—"Damn him and damn his anecdotes—he was a great bore." "We went to the Cottage and took some Whiskey. I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof—they are so bad I cannot transcribe them." In the long climb of Ben Nevis, Keats and Brown paused to drop stones into the deep crevasses and hear the echoes reverberating up to them "in fine style." After the Scotch trip, poverty, love and engagement, Tom's illness and death, and his own illness gradually contracted Keats's sociability. Many of his friends resented Fanny Brawne. But the real change was physiological. As the disease took real hold of Keats he became at once lethargic and hyper-sensitive in his attitude toward people. Returning from Winchester in 1819, he found, in London, "not one house" he "felt any pleasure to call at." By 1820 lassitude had so far changed him that at a friend's house "the fact is that I did behave badly; but it is to be attributed to my health, spirits and the disadvantageous ground I stand on in society. I could go and accommodate matters if I were not too weary of the world. . . . I foresee I shall know very few people in the course of a year or two." But all of his friends—except possibly Dilke—did remain loyal. Woodhouse, the friend of Taylor, was, throughout Keats's life, the strongest bulwark he had, showing him a devotion, partly personal and partly based on a conviction of his literary greatness, which never wavered. Time and again he stepped into the financial breach, supplying without Keats's knowledge the moneys, or part of them, apparently advanced by the publishers. When Keats and Severn sailed for Italy in September, 1820, Woodhouse and Haslam accompanied them to Gravesend. Just before the embarkation Woodhouse cut off the lock of Keats's hair which is preserved in the Morgan collection, and handed him a letter assuring him that he would see him through financially and closing:

"God bless you!—Take care of yourself,—if it be only for your

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friends' sake. Above all, keep your mind at ease. There are many who take more than a brotherly interest in your welfare. There is certainly

. . . . . one, whose hand will never scant  
From his poor store of fruits all *thou* can't want."

To the same purport is Haslam's subsequent letter to Severn: ". . . Keats must get himself well again, Severn, if but for us. I, for one, cannot afford to lose him. If I know what it is to love, I truly love John Keats. . ." The splendid fidelity of Severn to his dying companion will be instanced later, in connection with the events immediately preceding Keats's death.

Elizabeth Barrett hated formal society anyway, so that her father's imprisonment of her was not, on this score, a serious burden. In the forties she was in demand in literary London, but refused all invitations and saw no one in her "dim chamber" except the immediate family and a few friends, including Miss Mitford and John Kenyon. The latter was a remote cousin of her father, a wealthy and attractive philanthropist, art patron and gourmet, the friend of all literary London. One day he brought Robert Browning with him.

Lowell, living on Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge, after trying for many months to locate Forceythe Wilson, originally from Wisconsin, discovered that he was his next-door neighbor.

Emerson was less successful in a similar search. One George Tufts, a crippled mechanic, who lived in a village in the eastern Adirondacks, sent him several letters which impressed him in their criticism of his point of view. When he was in Saratoga he went on a journey of several days to find the man, who had vanished. Emerson was social in the personal sense, unconventional and interested in all and sundry. But he was from boyhood appalled into silence by clever people in society, as well as practical people, and people with sound sense and convictions. He retreated from Abolitionists and all similar reformers who besieged him, even invading the privacy of his study where he sat "glued

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to his chair, all thought, all action, all play departed, paralyzed"; and in his great days the equally disquieting hordes of disciples who tried to compromise him by nailing him to their own interpretation of his words. To all these he learned to give stupid conversation and cake and lemons in the parlor at stated hours. But Emerson did need society and sought out people who he knew would not invade his privacy. After speaking at Amherst, Williams or Dartmouth, he often stayed several days talking with the students. He always liked discussion clubs, first the Transcendental Club and afterwards the famous Saturday Club—Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Agassiz, Dana, Henry James, Appleton, Felton, Samuel Gridley Howe, Whittier, Sumner, Prescott, Motley, Dwight and many others—whose monthly meetings at the Parker House Emerson seldom missed. When he first went abroad at twenty-nine he did not scruple to seek out the great. Horatio Greenough entertained him in Florence and took him to Landor, who "received his guest in a cloud of pictures." In Paris he dined with Lafayette. He called on Coleridge in London, visited Wordsworth at Rydal Mount, and travelled sixteen miles in a rusty gig through dreary country to stay overnight with Carlyle at Craigenputtock, and so founded their life-long friendship. Returning to England to lecture, at forty-four, he was lionized by all the great and thoroughly enjoyed it. Emerson was no snob. He merely protected himself automatically by aloofness from people with whom he felt no rapport. Margaret Fuller, who said, "I now know all the people worth knowing in America, and I find no intellect comparable to my own," battered her way into his intimacy. Jones Very won his devotion. There was his friendship for Thoreau which began in childhood. About 1841 Thoreau—who supported himself as a laborer and thought his own thoughts—took the hall bedroom in the Concord House, ostensibly to oversee Emerson's gardening, and they dug and planted and hoed together; and when Emerson took over *The Dial*, Thoreau canvassed for subscribers and read the proofs. The utopian Alcott was another whom Emerson always loved and often virtually supported. When a school had been founded in London in

Alcott's honor, Emerson gave him fifty dollars and a bill of exchange that he might visit it. Later when the Utopians had found that England was "hostile to human welfare, and her institutions . . . averse to the largest liberty of the soul," and so moved their school to America, that "second Eden," Emerson helped buy them their land. And thereafter he was always helping Alcott, leaving a twenty-dollar bill under a book on the table or behind a candlestick. Emerson took the offensive in pursuing the aloof Hawthorne, who had rented the old Emerson manse. He came on Hawthorne one day talking to Margaret Fuller in the woods and saw that he didn't like her. Often thereafter they met at the post office. They skated on the river. Emerson called and Hawthorne read Spenser to him. He called again and found Hawthorne tending his squashes. They took a walking trip together to the Shaker Colony at Harvard. But here, for once in his life, Emerson met his match. Hawthorne was usually silent or "looked his answers" out of his "haunted eyes." He never surrendered to Emerson, as all the world did. It was another case, like that of Keats and Shelley, where genius was afraid of genius. But there was no fear between Emerson and Carlyle, who on his arriving at ten o'clock at night for his second visit, greeted him with, "Well, here we are, shovelled together again!" and the following morning asked, "What has brought you over to the old country?—Surely not to 'lecture.' Aren't there enough wind-bags in Lancashire?" Later they climbed over the stones at Stonehenge, counting and measuring them, while the larks sang overhead. They disagreed on many things, but they trusted each other. In 1855 Walt Whitman, an unknown journeyman printer, sent him *Leaves of Grass*. Emerson, the great social soul, wrote him at once, "I greet you at the beginning of a great career"—and subsequently winced only a little when Walt quoted him without authority. He sought him out in the obscure house in Brooklyn, they walked three miles to the ferry, and dined together at the Astor. Thereafter they dined together often, Whitman coming once or twice to Boston. He annoyed Emerson with his "too much 'fellowship,'" insisting on dining in hotels

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with his coat off, and once refusing to drink out of a glass and calling for a tin cup. Also Emerson's plea to omit some of the poems in the second edition only made Walt the more determined to keep them in. And the Saturday Club spurned him for a boor, as did the ladies of Concord—including Mrs. Emerson. But Emerson himself never wavered, and kept on travelling all the way to New York to see him.

In spite of Whittier's shyness with strangers and the thunder of his written fanaticism, there was a sort of humorous tenderness about him that gave a personal color to his immense literary popularity. He was beloved in his home town, Amesbury. Critics everywhere managed somehow to overlook the technical flaws of his verse. Among his intimate friends were Mr. and Mrs. James T. Fields, Colonel Higginson, Sumner and Bayard Taylor.

Holmes, besides being a great conversationalist, was amiable with his favors. When Mrs. Moulton's drawing-room in Boston was crowded, he would come up to the hostess and say, "Now use me."

Fitzgerald said that his "friendships were more like loves," and his life was devoted more to his friendships with literary people, celebrated in voluminous correspondences, than to his own creative output. His closest friends—almost all of whom he criticized adversely and with impunity—included Alfred and Frederick Tennyson, Spedding, Carlyle, Thackeray, Barton, Pollock and Norton.

Tennyson was a self-conscious egoist half-buried in hearty, fraternal, loud-laughing companionability. It was egoism that made him shy and cranky in society, preferring solitude and the country to city life—"There is nothing here but myself and two starfish." Once when a lady wanted to meet him and they were both invited for that purpose to dine with a mutual friend, he at first was silent in her presence. Later in the evening he came up to her: "I could not find anything to say to you before dinner, but now that I have a bottle of port in me, I can talk as much as you like." Everybody around Farringford called the laureate by his first name. As a student at Cambridge, he had been shy and silent, one of a self-conscious group, "The Apostles," whose

professed purpose was to interpret the oracles of transcendental wisdom "for the enlightenment of the world," and whose actual function was to hero-worship and log-roll for one another. Ten years later he was bohemianizing in London a little less ponderously with the Sterling Club, which included Carlyle, Rogers, Barry Cornwall, Thackeray, Dickens, Forster, Landor and Maclige. He also saw much of Tom Moore, Landor, Campbell and Milne at this time, and established life-long friendships with Fitzgerald, Rogers and Carlyle, who called him "a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man." After he was about sixty, and a great man, though he refused to be lionized, he used to go into London to the meetings of the Metaphysical Society which included Huxley, Froude, Gladstone, all the distinguished men of the day in every walk of life. He took no part in the discussions, "but his mere presence added dignity to a dignified assemblage"—which dignified silence Nicolson explains thus: "Even as in the old days of The Apostles he would hesitate to exhibit his own intellectual insufficiencies to his fellow-members." His great and definitive friendship was with Arthur Hallam—one of The Apostles—who at Cambridge inspired "amazed and tremulous feelings" in Tennyson, and whose death, when Tennyson was twenty-four, inspired much of his greatest lyric poetry. Hallam died in Vienna of a burst blood-vessel on the brain, and immediately after his burial in England, Tennyson began to compose *In Memoriam*. On its anonymous publication seventeen years later one reviewer said, "These touching lines evidently come from the full heart of the widow of a military man." Under the gruff surface there was in Tennyson's soul a sensitive, affectionate tenderness that was almost feminine. He was particularly at home with children, joining in their games, loving to hold them on his knee and tell them stories. His Victorian relations with Victoria, partly brotherly, partly flirtatious, partly imperial, will be noticed at a later point.

Poe's literary contribution and social attitude—all of a piece—may have derived from his consciousness of low origins, while actually moving in the snobbish society of

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Richmond. If he had been comfortably and hopelessly aristocratic or uncomfortably and hopelessly lower-class, he would still have been a great writer, but of a stamp so different from what he actually was as to be hardly imaginable. As things stood, having the poet's sensitiveness and conviction of his own importance, he was, even more than other poets, a man alone, rooted in no social structure, critical, cynical, suspicious, always on the defensive inwardly and so on the defensive outwardly, prone to fall back on his own resources of bottomless melancholy and the romantic legend of Poe which he spun for his own contemplation and encouragement. As he was the father of the modern critical canon of literary art for literary art's sake, so he was precocious (historically speaking) in modern individualism for the individual's sake, the honest facing, to the point of exaggeration, of the predatory and negative qualities of men, the sneer at all mystical and moralistic pretence, the tendency to perceive and emphasize the mean or fake, rather than the generous or honest aspect of all men's motives. Being thus lonely, and withal of an emotional and affectionate turn, his only spontaneous out-going was in that direction whence he was sure to get in return a nourishing reassurance for his own ego, namely in the direction of women. With men he was reserved, suspicious, cynical and anti-social. In general society he was gay, if at all, in the shallowest and most dissipated terms. He had no friends at the University of Virginia, though he certainly participated vivaciously in the excesses fashionable for young gentlemen. He was no better off in low tavern company, for there was no one there to understand his inter-class dilemma. Toward these he was an intellectual snob. Toward the great, including the literary great, he was proud and defiant. His complex and his sneer were not un-Jewish. He would have been a good communist of the negative or angry type. Fortunately for literature his conscious thought was concrete and personal rather than social. Still more fortunately he had not heard of the economic school in criticism. He was content to be an original poet and a great and original critic. Poe's sly passages with Chivers and Lowell will be given in the

section on "The Struggle for Existence." When he met Margaret Fuller in New York he spoke of her "talking in her detested transcendental Boston dialect." When living at Fordham he had a habit of avoiding literary callers by hiding under a ledge back of the house.

Browning is remembered rather as a diner-out and a conversationalist than as the intimate friend of anybody. He was almost forty before he finally relinquished his penchant for a diplomatic career. When he was twenty-five he was present at Talfourd's dinner when the latter's *Ion* was being produced by Macready. It was probably as much in compliment to his social charm as to his poetry—then generally unappreciated—that Talfourd toasted him as "the youngest poet of England" and Wordsworth seconded the toast. On his first trip to Italy the captain of the ship offered him a free passage on to Constantinople, and again in 1844 an Italian travelling acquaintance insisted on arranging for him all the details of a trip through Italy. After his marriage he suffered a social hiatus—perhaps because of the somewhat unconventional circumstances of the elopement and the consequent estrangement from the Barretts, perhaps because of self-consciousness in the matter of the superiority of Elizabeth's reputation to his own, perhaps because she was herself not very social. At any event she wrote of them in Italy that they "retreated from the kind advances of the English society." But returning to London four and a half years later with success in his satchel he again plunged into formal society and was, with his wife, heavily entertained, both there and in Paris. On their next visit to England the burden of sociability overwhelmed Mrs. Browning and she longed for the peace of Italy. But it was not all peace there. Once they attended a dinner in Florence at which Monckton Milnes, Mignet and Cavour were present, and George Sand was crowned with and wore a wreath of ivy. After a few quiet years following Mrs. Browning's death the old poet resumed his course from dinner to dinner, and was exhausted at the end of every social season. He especially loved university affairs, though they might keep him five hours at table—probably enjoying thus the

academic association which he had missed in youth. However, he would himself never speak in public. He always hit up and maintained a great intimacy with children. Wherever human beings were generalized Browning was, for a poet, remarkably social. But individually it was a different matter. As long as there was a comfortable barrier across which he could practice his social diplomacy, he was as enthusiastic and gushing as in public. To adoring lion-hunters he was charitable, hospitable and flattering, as in the episode, recorded by Chubb, of the young man who later reported his visit to the great man in Italy. Upon Browning's appearance, after seemly confusion, "I recovered myself to find him standing before me, holding both my hands and saying, 'Now this is really very kind of you, to come so far just to see an old man like me.' Then he dragged up a companion chair and forced me into it, standing for some moments by my side, with his hand on my shoulder. Then he sat down and said, 'Well, tell me all about yourself. Have you not brought some of your poems to show me?'" On another visit of the same young man, Browning was deeply moved by the recent death of Arnold, his "'dear old friend, Mat. . . . He told me once, when I asked him why he had written no poetry lately, that he could not afford to do it; but that, when he had saved up enough, he intended to go back to poetry. I wonder if he has gone back to it *now*.' Here Browning's voice shook, and he was altogether more deeply moved than I had ever seen him." It was all very well, and perfectly sincere, when one was a stranger, or an inferior, or was dead. But for intimate personal companionship Browning, like many other poets, depended on women. After Mrs. Browning's death, her sister Arabel became his close friend and consolation and he visited her every day. After his father's death his own sister kept house for him. But there was no memorable friendship with any man. Once, returning from Italy, he saw Tennyson on the platform at Amiens, and pulled up his coat-collar to avoid recognition.

Whitman's hearty and genuine sociability was enhanced by his hairy-chested proletarian philosophy and his vanity,

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while his intimate friendships are supposed to have been intensified by his homosexual tendency. The picture of him, before the great "strong uneducated" change at thirty, is of a man intensely curious about all sorts of men rather than one socially convivial or anxious for particular intimacies. After a clam-bake of sixty newspaper men at Coney Island we see him riding home, not exactly drunk and disorderly, but rather a little aloof, perched with the driver on the box of the six-horse stage. On his trip to New Orleans when he was twenty-seven, he records the details of the crowds with the greatest zest, but there is no mention of any individual association. In New Orleans he put on a dress suit and went to a ball for the first time. He split his white gloves pulling them on, so that his hands looked like "cracked dumplings." It was a year or two after this that his personality crystallized, and he turned against "pride and formalism—with the self-righteousness of the social inferior." Thereafter he identified himself with the uneducated classes—who, ironically enough, read Longfellow, while it was the hated educated classes that took up Whitman. But he won the personal affection of all kinds of laborers, though they understood nothing of his work or of the classics he was forever pressing into their hands. After some antagonism to him for his bookishness he got admitted to the fellowship of the New York omnibus drivers, because one winter when one of them was sick he took his place on the box and kept his family supported. In his thirties he habitually visited sick bus drivers and ferrymen in the New York hospitals, where the doctors referred to him as "the saint." Once when he was in Boston he met a miserable, battered ruffian who was a fugitive from New York where he was wanted for murder and was on his way to Canada. Whitman had known him years before in New York. He confessed his story to Whitman, who put his arms around his neck and kissed the horrible face, and the man hastened away sobbing. When a baby in a crowded Washington horse car was screaming, Whitman took it from its mother into his own arms; the infant stared at him a long time, then snuggled against him and fell asleep. Pres-

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ently the conductor got off the car to get his supper, and Whitman acted as conductor the rest of the trip, still holding the sleeping baby. The vain side of Whitman's attitude as the prophet of the people was apparent in his status in Pfaff's saloon, New York, a bohemian hang-out where, after the success of *Leaves of Grass* in the late 1850's, he sat silent, "watched and was worshipped." Once when Howells, the "chaste young Ohioan," was leaving this cellar saloon in disgust, Whitman, mistaking him for one of his worshippers, jumped up and shook him warmly by the hand as a token that his presence was welcome to benevolent celebrity. On another occasion, observing a young man who appeared to be worshipping him from a distance, he crossed the floor to the stranger's table and allowed majestically, "You may speak to me if you wish." He was jealous of rivalry in Pfaff's and could be rude. Once he said to Aldrich, "Yes, Tom, I like your tinkles, I like them very well," and thus made an enemy. Whitman could, if he wanted, dress and act the cultivated gentleman. But he was consistent in his rôle. When Lord Houghton called on him, he took the visiting celebrity, not to a hotel, but to the Whitman house in Brooklyn to share a meal of boiled potatoes. His shirt-sleeved and tin-cupped unconventionality with Emerson was mentioned earlier. In his fifties he was often lionized in New York; but he would never put on a dress suit. This posing of Whitman's was at worst consistent with his controlling convictions and in no way sullied the deep and sincere, social genius of the man. Edward Carpenter said of him, somewhat later than the Pfaff's period, "No one could be more . . . courteous, no one could have more simplicity of manner and freedom from egotistical wrigglings." He never failed to enlist the sympathy and affection of prominent as well as lowly people. Burroughs was a devoted friend of his. In Washington, Lincoln drove daily in a barouche past Whitman's boarding place and, each recognizing "the unusual caliber of the other, they 'habitually' saluted each other with a bow." Moncure Conway, the Virginia gentleman, called on Whitman in 1855 and, like the rich young man in Matthew, hardly

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turned from an impulse to leave all and follow him. While in the Department of the Interior he made friends with some Indian Chiefs and called on them in their hotel. Fifteen years later he met the same men in prison in Colorado. They refused any recognition to the then government officials accompanying him, but each extended his hand to Whitman, with a cordial "How." In 1885, being then sixty-four, he could no longer get about on foot and a number of friends—including Talcott Williams, Charles Dudley Warner, Holmes, Gilder, Booth and Clemens—contributed \$10 each to buy him a horse and buggy. Two years later some Boston friends sent him \$800 to build a cottage at Timber Creek, near Camden, where he frequently went to bask and bathe; but he was too weak to undertake the enterprise and they let him divert the money to other uses. While not exactly a convivial companion, Whitman was a supremely affectionate and generous soul, and wherever he directed his large sympathy he almost always elicited a trusting and devoted response. If his general loving impulse was tinged with homosexual tendencies, it was hardly, as Mrs. Lewissohn says, of "the most advanced and virulent type." If he had been thus far gone in perversion it is unlikely, in his day and age, that he either would have desired or could have kept the devotion of such a healthy mind as Emerson's, such a prim one as Burroughs's, such a conventionally masculine one as Conway's, and scores of other such, not to mention the hundreds of tough nuts with whom he hobnobbed in the New York saloons. When he was in camp with his brother George at Fredericksburg, he called every boy "dear son and comrade," and they all called him "father." There were the many cases—notably that of the sensitive boy from Plymouth—when a soldier was dying of wounds or dysentery, coupled with exhaustion and brutal treatment, and Whitman actually saved his life by reviving his will to live. There was the Mississippi captain who was wounded at Fredericksburg and had his leg amputated in Washington, and who, whenever Whitman left him in the hospital, would reach up and draw him down and kiss him. There was Peter Boyle, the paroled Confederate pris-

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oner employed as a street-car conductor in Washington, with whom Whitman took "long walks on the beautiful moonlit roads" around the city; or in town they would buy a water-melon and sit down on the curb of the avenue and eat it then and there. With this boy and many others he exchanged almost passionate letters, to the end of his life. All of these associations can be glibly explained on a homosexual basis. But if there had been practice to any "virulent" extent it must surely have caused Whitman to withdraw somewhat from the world and to contract his broad easy-going universal comradeship. And this was always the distinctive mark of him: a general, Christ-like love of mankind, expressed in actual *works* that lessened only with his aging energies. Of all the poets, Whitman was the greatest social human being. In fact we have to rake universal history pretty fine to match him. The only known shadow on his large humanity was in one financial transaction. When he was in Washington he devoted everything he made, above his bare necessities, to presents for the boys in the hospitals. His habitual way of accepting gifts without show of gratitude may be justified on the ground that he was honest in his belief that what he got from the world was more than recompensed by what he gave. But his treatment of Mrs. Davis, who took care of the invalided last seven or eight years of his life, was thrifty to the verge of meanness. To his care she devoted all of her property, her time and her reputation. In return he gave her a petty allowance on which to run the house, and did not increase it as his own finances improved, but burdened her with more work in the form of increasing numbers of guests to entertain, and in his will he left her only \$500.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was an association of self-conscious æsthetes such as could hardly have existed outside a powerful, anti-intellectual—that is, moralistic or commercial—civilization. Although flouting the Victorian conventions, they were themselves Victorian in that they must needs sentimentalize their uniqueness and create their own conventions of properly exotic behavior. The group included, among others, Rossetti, Morris, Allingham, Burne-Jones,

Holman Hunt, Millais; later Swinburne, and for a short time Meredith. They met Saturday nights in Rossetti's attic, furnished with three or four broken chairs, and read or recited poetry to each other, their combined memories holding "in solution all the verses in the world." Besides reading and reciting creditable verses, they had the incredible naïveté to poetize their conversation and any passing event. Sometimes these squibbs were quoted, usually they were improvised. When William Rossetti—Dante's brother—opened the window, Dante would respond, "Oh, lady bright, can it be right?—This window, open to the night." When Allingham lost something, he murmured, as he searched, "Oh, what is gone we fancied ours? Oh, what is lost that never can be told?" And again, hearing a disturbance in the kitchen, "Oh, what is it, that they say or do?" This mothy sentimentality was nothing to hold a group of grown men together. The Brotherhood, socially speaking, depended for its adhesion on two conditions: the strong leadership of Rossetti, and the high egotism of youths crusading in a common cause. When the first of these grew arrogantly indifferent, and the second evaporated with maturity, the group dissolved.

Rossetti was a powerful, self-sufficient individual, a sort of civilized recluse, personally independent of any social ties. Class distinctions did not exist for him. He hated natural beauty and the country. Human beauty was everything to him, and the only consistent thread in his preoccupation with people was æsthetic. He was never avid of admiration or curiosity, resented any invasion of his privacy, and became, at the end of his life, a recluse in fact. He did, however, have a devastating surface of social charm, and, descending from his habitual insouciance, could be courteous, gentle, humorous, altogether ingratiating. He was a fine momentary friend, but in the long run forgetful, æsthetic and heartless. Old friendship meant nothing to him as such, only the moment's *rapport* with this person before me now. He was habitually insulting to strangers, then if he liked them, would turn suddenly and make friends of them. Altogether an insidious hazard for the consistently affec-

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tionate and generous, this decorative, exotic growth of lichens and orchids concealing the indifference of granite. Morris utterly surrendered to him, renouncing every personal desire to follow his commands. Burne-Jones, taking a friend to call on Rossetti, said, "We shall see the greatest man in Europe." Ruskin also fell for a time under the spell, but was himself too egotistical to surrender, and instead tried to "old-maid" it over Dante. The result of course was that Dante grew bored and the relationship ended. But there were always plenty more to replace the friends who drifted away. In the 1870's he was as much a god as ever, but now with a younger group of disciples—Pater, O'Shaughnessy, Marston, Murray, Gosse. He was still courteous, helped them all with their work and was the only painter of his time who taught young artists for nothing. Returning from his wedding trip broke, he pawned one of his wife's jewels to give money to the widow of a painter, just deceased. Marston wrote, "Why is he not some great exiled king, that we may give our lives in trying to restore him to his kingdom?" This was the sort of mediæval tapestry which his own æsthetic theories invited and which a decadent bohemianism easily threw around him. But withal it was a king-like figure, alone but strongly so and without loneliness, courteous but without condescension, arrogant not defensively but in self-sufficiency, a sort of regal symbol, personally untouchable but kindly, a rock, a visible idol to fix men's wandering loyalties. No one even thought to be an equal in his presence. You either deferred or departed. And it was all natural and inevitable; there was no pretense in the man; he exacted no tribute; he beheaded no one except for boring him. When his health finally collapsed, his subjects rose spontaneously in scores to comfort him.

Emily Brontë had great tenderness for all sick and weak things—animals or people—but she was too shy to contract any real friendships outside the family circle.

Meredith was buoyant, boisterous and delightful with his friends, and he endeared children to him by improvised ditties and jokes. His associations being spontaneous and

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unself-conscious, he had in consequence few literary contacts, and on the other hand no sentimental pretense of affection for common people. Once, when accosted by a beggar, he said: "I never give to a man I don't know—I never give to a man I don't know." But for a few intimates Meredith was a recluse from society of all kinds, for fifty working years so much so that curious journalists legendized him. But after the success of *The Amazing Marriage*, when he was almost seventy, he became suddenly expansive and hospitable to all and sundry, including the pilgrims who swarmed round his little house. Among his few literary near-friends were Swinburne, Sandys and Rossetti. He rented a room in Rossetti's house in Cheyne Walk, to use on his weekly visits to London. He and the Pre-Raphaelite King admired each other, but Meredith was himself a bit of a titan, and so incapable of adulation. Before long Rossetti proved too sloppy and bizarre in his habits for Meredith's fastidious soul, and the sub-tenancy ended quietly, without a quarrel.

Emily Dickinson was naturally a sprightly social creature, a great dancer and party-goer during her girlhood in Amherst. When in Washington with her father she acted as hostess for him. She was devoted to her brother's children and would send them sweets surreptitiously, with notes such as "Omit to return the box. Omit to know you received the box." The laborers on her father's farm adored her "almost as a Madonna," and they carried her body to the cemetery. When she was twenty-four she went to Washington with her father and "amused and astonished" her friends with her social sprightliness. After her father's death when she was forty-eight, she never left the house, writing "I am not at home," or "When I was at home," and Sister Lavinia protected her from the world. She refused to see old friends such as Mr. Bowles who drove all the way from Springfield to call on her. Emerson visited her brother in 1857 and she wrote to Sister Sue, "It must have been as if he came from where dreams are." But she didn't see him.

Swinburne was courteous and debonair in society, "as be-

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fitted one of ancient lineage." Though normally reserved, impersonal and aloof on most occasions he habitually appeared at people's houses with his pockets stuffed with manuscripts to read, and when he read he became a wild sort of orgiast, skipping and writhing about. As in his reading, so in his personal relationships, he was susceptible of ecstasy. When he called on Landor in Florence he flabbergasted the octogenarian by flinging himself on his knees before him and asking his blessing. Afterward they met agreeably enough. Personal loyalty was more to Swinburne than duty or honor. When *The Examiner* was sued on account of an article of his, he refused to help them because they had detracted a friend. When he made a friendship he was completely absorbed, becoming so docile as to have no personality left. This occurred first with Rossetti and Morris, whom he met as an undergraduate in Oxford, where they were employed to paint murals in the Oxford Union. He was the only one to weep when Rossetti's wife died. Later Burton enveloped him, and Gosse, and finally Watts-Dunton. The latter "saved" him from drink and his bohemian associates, and destroyed his poetry. He lost all individuality in Watts-Dunton's house, surrendering his opinions and his old friends, for his host not only forbade him to see them but—according to Gosse—inspired him to sudden and unprovoked attacks on them. During this last period he developed a passion for infants and urged ladies to bring out their babies to see him in Putney.

Francis Thompson was naturally affectionate but too frail nervously to withstand any but the simplest, the most child-like, impacts of personality. Against the world generally he took refuge in the cradling institutionalism of Catholicism. He gave his complete devotion to Christ, "through Christ to the church, and through the church to men." Thus he was safe in remoteness, while enjoying a vague sense of generalized humanity. The complicated gestures of conventional communication were quite beyond his power to master. The drama of his original approach to Wilfred Meynell on the latter's invitation, three times advancing and retreating from the door, is probably the most excruciating trag-

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farce of shyness in the history of literature. Scarcely once in his life did he keep an engagement, failing to appear for carefully arranged appointments with such as Blunt, Yeats and Patmore. Meredith once captured him and carried him off to his house where Thompson was miserable with nature crowding without and Meredith's personality crowding within. At meals Thompson would sit mostly silent, sometimes quitting the table suddenly, his food half consumed, "as if at some imperious mandate, but . . . without leaving behind him the slightest suspicion of courtesy." After dinner he would "pace the room with a book in his hand, striking innumerable matches, never keeping his pipe alight, rarely taking part in the general conversation, but ever courteous and ever ready to laugh at the slightest pleasantry." When he fled to London from his father's house he was at first without any companionship at all. But slowly he began to form the only companionship that was ever easy for him. Among the derelicts and criminals of the London gutters he found something of the simplicity he had known as a child with his mother and sisters. Here no one tried to *get at him* and there was none of the formal appointments and thoughtfulnesses to go through with. Here, for a year and a half, while his body starved, his spirit was at ease in the impersonal sort of generalized love that was his nearest approach to men. He sat around a fire on the embankment, with other bums, and nothing was said. That one of his associates was a burglar and another an uncaught murderer made them all the safer for him. They would not question each other, and they would not betray each other to that heavy world that loomed over them all. Again in the family of McMasters, the bootmaker, he felt almost at ease. They were all kindly, but they stood a little away from him as a gentleman, and so left him his privacy. Even after the Meynells had "saved" him, he preferred to live in his dirty boarding-house room; and he habitually spent his evenings around the fire in the "Skiddaw" pub with rough men of the type he had known before, men who both liked him for his courtesy and humility and respected his fluttering privacy for the same reason. Patmore was perhaps the only man who

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ever finally reached him, the only friend whom he loved and trusted absolutely and without reservation as an equal.

Wilde began his spectacular social career at Oxford. His exotically furnished rooms were a salon where undergraduates gathered on Sunday nights to drink punch, the host affecting a superiority which made him, while courted for his wit, disliked. In London his key to everybody's affection was immediate and enthusiastic praise of anything or anybody that pleased him. Tennyson, Hardy, Meredith, Browning, Arnold, Swinburne all were fond of him. Wilde himself specially worshipped Whistler, recognizing a wit that was readier than his own.

"Children went to Field's lap as promptly as to a garden swing," and he preferred them to all other company. "On going into a strange household, it was as natural for him to seek out the children as for a cat to inspect the garret."

Stevenson won the devotion of the Samoans. When the European powers imprisoned Mataafa, one of their chiefs, Stevenson visited him and other political prisoners, bringing them tobacco and other gifts. When they were released they voluntarily built a wide road up to Stevenson's house; and they made him a chief of one of the tribes. Once when Sosimo, his body-servant, had been unusually thoughtful, Stevenson complimented him, "Great is the wisdom." "Nay," Sosimo replied, "great is the love." When Stevenson died a group of picked natives bore the coffin to the place of interment on the mountain top. A stranger had appeared at the funeral, to which only close personal friends were invited, a Scotchman who explained that some years before Stevenson had met him on the road as a stranger on a day when he was contemplating suicide, but that Stevenson had dissuaded him. The Samoan chiefs tabooed the use of fire-arms on the hill of his grave, that the birds might sing there undisturbed.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Page 106, Chaucer. See his social insufficiency, *Looks and Manners*, pp. 67-8.

Page 114, Swift. See his entertainment of Pope and Gay, *The Struggle for Existence*, p. 322.

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Pages 115-6, Pope. See his publication of Swift's letters, *Worldly Vanity and Heavenly Conceit*, p. 488.

Pages 120-1, Blake. See also his popularity with the local people of Felpham, *Courts, Crimes and Prison*, p. 376.

Pages 125-7, Coleridge. See his popularity with the dragoons, *Struggle for Existence*, p. 326.

Landor (not mentioned in this section). See his attitude toward people generally in *In Action*, pp. 396-7, and in *Worldly Vanity and Heavenly Conceit*, p. 493.

Pages 131-7, Keats. See his popularity at school, *The Young Egoists*, p. 21; also social sonneteering at Hunt's, *At Work*, p. 227; also, Severn's attachment to him, *Death*, pp. 274-80.

Page 150, Bronte. See her talking with her back turned, *Miscellaneous Aberrations*, p. 474.

Pages 153-4, Thompson. See timidity in first interview with Meynell, *Miscellaneous Aberrations*, p. 475.



*PART III*  
**THE POET AROUND THE HOUSE**



## *HOME AND TRAVEL*

Until Chaucer was forty-five he was frequently abroad on diplomatic missions. When he was thirty-three he leased a house in Aldgate, for the term of his life, but at forty-five he had disposed of this lease and took a house in the country at Greenwich, where he lived until he was about fifty-five and where the best of his work was done. In 1394, six years before his death, he took a long lease on a house in the garden of the Chapel of St. Mary, Westminster, near the spot now occupied by Henry VII's Chapel.

Skelton, having satirized Wolsey, to escape his vengeance took shelter in the sanctuary of Westminster Abbey, where he resided till his death in 1529.

In 1586, being then thirty-three, Spenser got, on condition that he live there, a grant in Ireland of 3028 acres forfeited land of the Earl of Desmond, including Kilcolman Castle. This ancient stronghold stood "in the midst of a large plain, by the side of a lake; the river Mulla ran through his grounds, and a chain of mountains in the distance seemed to bulwark in the romantic retreat. Here he wrote the *Faerie Queene*, . . . received visits from Raleigh, brought his young wife, and resided until the Irish rebels burned the 'romantic retreat' in the Insurrection of 1598."

In 1597, when Shakespeare was thirty-three, he bought the "New Place," one of the largest houses in Stratford, for £60. His headquarters remained in London, however, where he lived for a while in Shoreditch, and later "lay" in the house of Christopher Mountjoy, a tire-maker. In 1610 he retired permanently to the "New Place," where he lived as a gentleman, receiving his friends and neighbors in the garden with its mulberry tree. In 1759 the house was torn down.

After Ben Jonson's marriage to Jane Ashton, daughter of the host of the Moon Tavern, he lived for some time with

his father-in-law at the hostelry. Upon the success of *Every Man in His Humour* he bought an old house on the river. He was, however, seldom at home, and after finally leaving his wife got himself supported for three months by Aurelian Townshend, a young Oxford graduate and poetic aspirant. Thereafter Ben lived mostly in lodgings, high or low according to his fortunes. During his opulence under James I, he returned to his house on the Thames, and there collected the library which was swelled by the inheritance of the books of Campden, his old teacher. The library became a haunt of scholars and antiquaries. During the period of his later poverty it was burned entire along with many of his own notes and manuscripts.

Drummond was a recluse, spending his whole life on his romantically wooded, hilled and glenned estate at Hawthornden, near Roslin.

After leaving Cambridge Donne lived luxuriously in the great house of Sir Thomas Egerton, as his secretary. After his disastrous secret marriage and consequent loss of his job, he had for a time the loan of the fine house of his friend and cousin, Sir Francis Wooley, in Pyrford, near his angry father-in-law, Sir George More, to whom he became gradually reconciled. In 1606-7 his fortune was very low and he lived wretchedly with his wife and numerous children, in a little "thin-walled" house in Mitcham which he called his "prison" and his "hospital," some of the family always, and himself often, being sick in bed, and several of the children dying, mostly as a result of cold and under-nourishment. In 1621 he was appointed Dean of St. Paul's, got the magnificent Deanery, and thereafter lived in affluence. Donne always had a scorn for English literature, especially English poetry, but he collected a fine Spanish library.

Milton lived in Italy for a year when he was thirty. Returning, he took a house at Aldersgate, on the edge of London, needing more room than his father's house afforded to house the books, especially the music books, he had collected on his travels. Thereafter he frequently changed his residence, the prime requirement in each house being a garden in which he could walk. In 1643, when he was thirty-five

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and a school-teacher, he took a larger house at Barbican, where he harbored his father, several of his students and, after the fall of Oxford, most of his wife's family, they being Cavaliers. Many changes of residence followed. His last house was in a locality in London now called Burnhill Row, containing a street now called Milton Street, although no such street was then in existence. Here, during the composition of the epics, he lived "in a small chamber hung with rusty green, sitting in an elbow chair, and dressed neatly in black." At the door of this house the blind poet would often sit in the sun, facing the Artillery Ground, and here he received his visitors.

After graduating from Cambridge, Marvell spent four or five years in France, Spain, Holland and Italy. Thereafter, as lifelong member for Hull, he lived in lodgings in London.

Herrick, very much against his will, spent most of his life in the vicarage of Dean Prior in Devon.

Vaughan spent his life in the rocky regions of Wales inhabited in ancient times by the Silures—wherfrom he affected the title of "The Silurist."

There is some evidence that Waller, as a young man, visited America. After his lucky escape from his anti-Parliament plot with only fine and banishment, he lived for a time in Roan, and afterwards in Paris with "great splendour and hospitality," wasting his large fortune. After getting permission from Cromwell to return to England, he retired into the country to live quietly on the little income he had left and in a house built to his own design. In his old age he bought a house at Colshill in order to die where he was born—he did not die there, however.

Cowley lived in Paris with the court for twelve years during the Commonwealth. Returning to England and being much disgruntled by Charles II's lack of recognition of his former services in Paris, he finally obtained the holding in Chertsey, Surrey, already referred to, lived there in comparative discomfort for seven years and so died.

Sheffield, the Duke of Buckingham, built himself a magnificent house in St. James Park which was later bought by

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George III, pulled down by George IV and replaced by the present palace, still called Buckingham.

Pope was early in the eighteenth-century fad of landscape-gardening. On his grounds at Twickenham he arranged vistas terminating in obelisks and mock-classical temples, having, besides, one “temple wholly comprised of shells in the rustic manner.” His famous grotto there bespoke not only the extremity of his rococo taste but his somewhat oblique manner of looking at life generally. Besides the customary fake mossy nooks and artificial rills, it was equipped with mirrors so arranged that when the doors were shut they reflected the outside world—the hills, the sky, the river with its boats, the highway with its travellers. When the grotto was lighted at night it glittered with bits of angular looking-glass.

Young spent the last thirty-five years of his long life on the living of Welwyn, Hertfordshire, where he wrote the *Night Thoughts*.

Upon the death of Queen Anne and the fall of the Tories, Swift, much against his will, retired to his Deanery of St. Patrick’s, near Dublin, hating Ireland and the Irish, but loyally serving them thereafter in politics.

Except for some two years in the house of Lord Tyrconnel, Savage never had any settled habitation.

After obtaining his pension and the valuable Leeward Island agency, Thomson retired to a house in Kew Lane, Richmond, where he “gloried” in rural retirement. He had a fine stock of wines and Scotch ale, and the house was elegantly furnished, as the inventory of the sale after his death showed.

Shenstone spent so much of his money in embellishing into a show place his natal house in the country—“entangling the walks” and “winding the waters” with great skill—that he was not only bound to it by poverty, but was compelled, for want of funds, to allow it to fall into dilapidation till the rain poured through the broken roof, “flooding the floors,” and he found it no longer possible to receive his “polite friends” there.

Gray, making at twenty-two the Grand Tour with Wal-

pole, anticipated Johnson in his astonishment, on landing at Calais, that the inhabitants could speak French so well. His French sojourn was the gayest of his life, he being much seduced by the *culte de tendre* of Louis XV, with its novels and boudoir poems, its pastoral-classical sentimentalities, its general sportiveness and caprice. Subsequently, settling into the recluse of Pembroke, Cambridge, he was the first person to be finicky about making his rooms pretty and scrupulously clean, with mignonette in the windows, a pair of blue and white Japanese vases and a harpsichord.

Ramsay, at fifty-seven, having recouped his fortunes, built himself a small octagon-shaped house on the north side of Castle Hill, Edinburgh. His friends called it a "goose-pie."

Cowper was, above all things, a sort of domestic maiden aunt. At Ulney he lived in mildly industrious innocence and "Christian happiness" with Mrs. Unwin, next door to the congenial revivalist preacher, Mr. Newton, with a door connecting the two gardens. Here is a quotation from one of his letters of invitation to his cousin, Lady Hesketh: "My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. . . . I will tell you what you shall find at your entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges 'Puss' [Cowper's pet hare] at present. But he, poor fellow, is worn out with age and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to it stands a table, which I also made. But a merciless servant having scrubbed it till it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament, and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at

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the farther end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlor, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, . . . and where we will be as happy as the day is long." In this house Cowper went mad for the second time, and, fancying that heaven had rejected him, insisted on being moved to the vicarage, where he was a trial to Mr. Newton. Later, having removed to Weston, he went mad again, and, on his recovery, the philanthropic and popular poet Hayley invited him to visit him at Earham, where he gathered a distinguished company in his honor. Cowper, however, could not stand the extensiveness of the view at Earham, and he and Mrs. Unwin returned to Weston.

In his early thirties Blake lived in Poland Street, London, where Shelley was to reside later. When he was thirty-six he acquired a small house of his own in Lambeth, near the Archbishop's palace, and this domestic independence occasioned a sudden spurt in his productiveness. The house had "a garden containing the famous grape vine which Blake characteristically never allowed to be pruned; the result being much foliage, much tangle of long, leafless spirals, and the most insignificant grapes." After living here for seven years in great poverty, Blake one day sent the great Hayley a letter of condolence on the death of the latter's illegitimate son, and Hayley, moved by the engraver's poverty, urged him to come to Felpham, holding out the prospect of much employment. Blake accepted with enthusiasm and shortly set out with his wife, travelling all day, "shifting their 'sixteen heavy boxes and portfolios full of prints' in and out of seven different chaises; till late at night they reached the tiny cottage which Blake had already hired for £20 a year. It had a garden, in which he was to see the Fairy Funeral, and into which the virgin Oolon was to descend. There were cornfields all about, through which Blake and Hayley were to ride, and beyond lay the sea, whose ever-shifting colors proved strangely fascinating to the man from town. Everything seemed ideal for the production of the most splendid works."

Hogg, near the end of his life, built himself a cottage on

a piece of moorland, seventy acres, given him by the Duchess of Buccleuch.

Scott, having married a lady of means, began life at twenty-six in a cottage at Lasswade. Presently they moved to a larger house in Selkirkshire, of which he became sheriff. When he was forty he bought 110 rough acres, changed the name from Cartley Hole to Abbotsford, and began the stately and spectacular aggrandizement which was to ruin him, purposing to establish his children in feudal splendor comparable to that of the great families of Scotch antiquity. The trees of the park he planted with his own hands, and gradually increased his holdings to 1500 acres. He paid high for his acquisitions, a total of £41,000, and he spent £20,000 more on the great mansion-house, a "romance of stone and lime," where he did "the honors for all Scotland." Upon the discovery of his insolvency in 1826, the honors ceased, but Abbotsford was not sold to satisfy his debts until after his death.

Wordsworth spent his twenty-third year in Orleans and Blois, living in the former city in a "very handsome apartment on the first floor, boarding near-by in the same house with two or three officers of the cavalry and a young gentleman of Paris," and apparently financing the entire enterprise on about £20. Returning from France he lived for three years with—and mostly on—relatives and friends, usually making the journey on foot from one haven to the next. In 1793 he went on a trip with a friend Calvert, in the latter's carriage. Near Salisbury the horse ditched and upset the equipage. Calvert rode the steed away and Wordsworth, penniless, "after wandering two days over Salisbury Plain, had no other recourse but to hasten to the home of his old friend Robert Jones in North Wales." In 1794 he and Dorothy visited together a cousin near Halifax, and thenceforward they were never separated. In 1795 they took, at nominal rent, the comfortable farmhouse of Pinney, a friend, at Racedown, and in 1796, again at nominal rent, the mansion with its spacious deer-park at Alfoxden. A year later they were given notice to quit Alfoxden on account of Wordsworth's then reputation of a revolutionary, and there-

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after, being almost penniless, walked miles about England, from friend's house to friend's house. Wordsworth recorded his *insouciance* in connection with the *Tintern Abbey* lines, composed on one of their hikes at this time—"No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasing for me to remember." In 1798 William and Dorothy went to Germany with Coleridge, and separated from him, the better to learn the language. They had difficulty in finding lodgings, for the Germans were shocked at a single lady travelling, but they finally settled in the house of a draper's family in Gosler, the house being so insufficient to the winter that Wordsworth wrote: "So severe was the cold . . . that, when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron. I slept in a room over a passage which was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say, rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night." In 1799 began the memorable stay of seven years at Dove Cottage, Grasmere. This small cote was tucked against the steep hill rising from the lake, and it was completely covered with flowers. It had, on the ground floor, a moderately large main room or hall, a bedroom and a small, dark kitchen, and on the second floor a room of the same size as the larger one below—eventually Wordsworth's study where he housed his 300 books—two small bedrooms and a small study or sitting-room. When William and Dorothy settled there they had almost no money left and couldn't buy furniture; the season was December; the chimney wouldn't draw; and they had bad colds. Yet on Christmas Eve Wordsworth wrote Coleridge with great enthusiasm of their plans for beautifying their little plot. Funds, as usual, gradually fell from heaven, and before long they established a tradition of genuine, if meager and rustic, hospitality. By 1806 Wordsworth's family overflowed Dove Cottage, and after a year's loan of a farmhouse of Sir George Beaumont, then patronizing Wordsworth, they rented a large house, Allan Bank, not far from Grasmere and Dove Cottage. Here Coleridge settled with them, with his two boys, and the household, without special guests, numbered thirteen—seven Words-

worths, three Coleridges, two maids and a little girl they were befriending. Besides, their hospitality here was so large that Wordsworth got little work accomplished—De-Quincey, the Clarksons, Mrs. Coleridge—though separated from her husband—and many others coming for long visits. In 1811 they moved to the Grasmere Rectory, and in 1813 to the isolated great house Rydal Mount, where Wordsworth lived in contentment with his “paradise” of a garden for thirty-seven years and died. Wordsworth’s library was always rich in books of travel, some old and rare, but poor in poetry.

Southern had “one of the most valuable private libraries in the kingdom.”

Throughout his life Coleridge longed for a home of his own, and never found it. For a time when he was twenty-six he enjoyed himself in a cottage at Nether Stowey adjoining and obtained for him by his friend Poole, a dark and drab little house, but comfortable on the whole, and having a kitchen garden in which Coleridge raised vegetables, rather boastfully than successfully. Hazlitt, visiting Coleridge there, described the easy life, “generally devoting the afternoons to delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet’s friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm trees, and listening to the bees humming around us, while we quaffed our *flip*.” At Nether Stowey Coleridge was largely dependent on his disciple-paying-guest Charles Lloyd, who was subject to fits of delirium and once had three in seven days. Another guest, George Burnett, one of the pantisocrats, unhappily got jaundice. Presently Coleridge set up with his wife at Greta Hall, Keswick, and Lamb describes a visit there: “Coleridge had got a blazing fire in the study; which is a large, antique, ill-shaped room, with an old-fashioned organ, never played upon, big enough for a church, shelves of scattered folios, an *Æolian* harp, and an old sofa, half bed.” Due to marital incompatibility this *ménage* did not last long, and Coleridge, leaving home, lapsed upon his friends and opium. In 1803, being far gone in despondency, Wordsworth and Sir George Beaumont contributed £100 each toward a subscription to send him to

Malta to recover himself, which project, after wavering many months, he finally accepted. After almost three years, being in great loneliness, he fled to Naples, where he was immediately in danger of arrest on Napoleon's order, generally for being an Englishman, and specifically on account of some of his letters to *The Morning Post*. He escaped to Leghorn and sailed home on an American ship. Thereafter Coleridge was always somebody's ward. From 1810 to 1816 he lived with the Morgans in London, they guaranteeing attendance on his lectures. And from 1816 until his death in 1834 he sank into a dependent and increasingly senile form of the domestic security he had always craved, in the house of the Gillmans who cared for him like a child.

Landor invested a fair share of his rich patrimony in the purchase of the big estate and romantic, half-ruined priory of Llanthony, in Wales. After squandering more thousands in repairing and renovating the old place, he passed a few years there in perpetual controversy with his unsympathetic neighbors, and being under constant threats of battery and murder, gave up the venture in disgust and repaired to Italy. Here his peregrinations from fine villa to fine villa were likewise marked, and sometimes hastened, by quarrels with his neighbors and the police, his longest residence being at the Villa Gheradesce, below Fiesole, which he must have because its grounds contained the Valley of Ladies described in the *Decameron*. When he was sixty years old, he left his wife and family and returned to England, first taking solitary lodgings in Bath, subsequently being taken care of by "several young ladies," and finally returning to occupy alone a *palazzo* in Florence.

Rogers's "generous and unostentatious hospitality" was practiced in his big house in St. James's Place.

Having been raised by his mother in reduced circumstances and cramped quarters, Byron in his eleventh year inherited the title and Newstead Abbey, a dilapidated priory of the twelfth century which had been bestowed on the Byrons by Henry VIII upon the dissolution of the monasteries. Arriving at the priory, young Byron planted a sapling oak and made it the "omen of his destiny." In 1807 he found it in

a dying state, to his superstitious horror. But it is flourishing today. In 1809, being then twenty-one, he wrote: "Come what may, *Newstead* and I stand or fall together. . . . I can endure privations, but could I exchange for *Newstead* Abbey the first fortune of the country, I would reject the proposition." The place was offered for sale at auction three years later, and sold in 1817. When Byron finally left England, he travelled in a huge coach copied from a famous one of Napoleon's taken at Genappe. It contained a bed, a library, a chest for plate and complete dining and culinary appointments. After leaving England his longest establishments were at Venice, at Ravenna with the Guicciolis, and in Pisa.

Hunt's house at Hampstead was a feckless riot of many children and bad housekeeping.

Clare, after his flare of success and marriage, settled with his wife in his father's peasant cottage, fitted up shelves on the wall and filled them with books, most of which had been sent him as presents. He told Chambers, who called, that he "liked them all." The last twenty-five years of his wretched life were passed in insane asylums with intervals of escape between.

Shelley's domestic locations were as disorderly and transient as those of most of the romantics. Hogg thus describes his rooms at Oxford, when they both were freshmen: "Books, boots, papers, shoes, philosophical instruments, clothes, pistols, linen, crockery, ammunition, and phials innumerable, with moneys, stockings, prints, crucibles, bags and boxes, were scattered on the floor in every place, as if the young chemist, in order to analyze the mystery of creation, had endeavored first to reconstruct the primeval chaos. The tables, and especially the carpet, were already stained with large spots of various hues, which frequently proclaimed the agency of fire. An electrical machine, an air pump, the galvanic trough, a solar microscope and large glass jars were conspicuous amidst the mass of matter. Upon the table by his side were some books lying open, several letters, a bundle of new pens and a bottle of japan-ink, that served as an ink-stand, a piece of deal, lately part of the lid of a box,

with many chips, and a handsome razor that had been used as a knife. There were bottles of soda-water, sugar, pieces of lemon, and the traces of an effervescent beverage. Two piles of books supported the tongs, and these upheld a small glass retort above an argand lamp. I had not been seated many minutes before the liquor in the vessel boiled over, adding fresh stains to the table, and rising in fumes with a disagreeable odor. Shelley snatched the glass quickly, and dashing it to pieces among ashes under the grate, increased the unpleasant and penetrating effluvium." From this time until well along in his second marriage Shelley had no settled abode, lodging variously in Edinburgh, London, Dublin, Bristol and elsewhere. At twenty-two he made his first venture abroad, in the form of the elopement with Mary Godwin and the ubiquitous companion Claire Clairmont. In the hectic journey across France he was deeply impressed by the Napoleonic desolation, and from the mountains around Besançon he got the imagery for *Prometheus Unbound*. In 1816 Shelley wrote his friend Peacock from Geneva, saying that he wanted to settle in one place, and for Peacock to rent him a house for fourteen or twenty-one years, somewhere near Windsor, which Peacock proceeded to do. But on the return of the Shelleys, accompanied by Claire, far gone in pregnancy by Byron, Shelley was afraid Godwin and all the world would accredit him with the coming event, and they slipped off to Bath until Claire was delivered in secret of the unhappy Allegra. Then they repaired to the house Peacock had leased at Great Marlow, and Shelley succeeded in living "in one place" for almost two years. But at the end of that time he was being rapidly impoverished by the importunities of friends he could not deny; the house was damp and his own health declined; he was in perpetual danger of losing, in Chancery, his children by Mary, as he had previously lost his children by Harriet; he was generally subject to judicial and ecclesiastical persecution on account of his atheism and absurdly lurid reputation; and he saw nothing but economic collapse for England, with no reform in sight. So in 1818 he took his family back to Italy, and the successive residences in Florence—"the most beautiful city

in the world," Pisa and Leghorn. The world did what it could for Coleridge, but he himself lacked the internal strength to find and hold domestic peace. Shelley, on the other hand, deserved peace, but the world and his friends hounded him out of his country.

Keats, being young and usually harassed, thrived upon change of scene and, if he could have afforded, would probably have been something of a traveller. When he went away from too much society in order to write *Endymion*, not only did he find solitude intolerable but, above all, located solitude, and every week or so we see him on the move—to the Isle of Wight, to Margate, to Canterbury, to London, to Hampstead, and to Burford Bridge; again going off to Devonshire on the *outside* of the coach the "night of the storm" in March, 1818; and again indulging in the, for him, violent walking trip in Scotland with Brown. Ultimately he desired, like Shelley, to live in "one place," but his relentless fate did not even permit him to die in England. Of Keats's numerous lodgings the following seem to have been of the longest duration: the rooms, while a student at Guy's Hospital, at 8 Dean Street, Borough, "a beastly place in dirt, turnings, and windings"; the rooms taken shortly after these with two other medical students over the shop of a tallow-chandler in St. Thomas' Street; a few comfortable months with brother Tom in rooms in Cheap-side; the happy residence with Tom, in the hope of overcoming the latter's tuberculosis, at Teignmouth, in Devon, in the house of the widow, Mrs. Jaffrey, and her two congenial daughters; the residence—from the early summer of 1817 till Tom's death at the end of 1818—at Well Walk, in Hampstead, at the house of the likeable Mr. Bentley, a postman, and his wife, besides his children whom Keats once referred to as making a "horrid row" and the smell of whose damp worsted stockings he once found occasion to mention "without enthusiasm," and friends Dilke and Brown for neighbors; after Tom's death the longest residence of all, with Brown, still in Hampstead, in the latter's half of the double house, Wentworth Place, owned jointly by Brown and Dilke. Brown's share of the house consisted,

on the ground floor, of two sitting-rooms, one on the rear facing the garden, which Brown occupied, one on the front looking across the road over Hampstead Heath, this occupied by Keats; and on the second floor two corresponding bedrooms. This remained Keats's headquarters for two years, and here he wrote all or some part of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, *Hyperion*, and the great Odes. Here, in February, 1820, his first hemorrhage occurred, which he recognized as his "death-warrant." In Rome his and Severn's lodgings were on the first floor of "the right-hand house at the bottom of the steps leading from the Piazza di Spagna to the Trinita dei Monti." Doctor Clark, Keats's physician, lived just across the square.

Emerson first went abroad in 1832, aged twenty-nine. In 1835 he married for the second time and bought and settled in the Concord House on the Boston Turnpike, an ample house on low ground, with a ridge cutting off the north wind, surrounded by pine, balsam, chestnut, and the big orchard which was Emerson's hobby. The house was "square, plain, white, with a Doric portico, . . . high ceilings, airy chambers, a garden by the brook . . . , the orchard and a barn." The barn was a complete carpenter's shop with bench, two planes, a chisel, vise, a square, a nail-box filled with nails, gimlet, pincers and screw-driver. In 1847, his reputation as a lecturer having crossed the ocean, he was besieged by invitations from England to speak, and so went abroad for the second time, touring England from lecture-platform to lecture-platform for about a year, and being much feted there and in Paris. In 1871, being fatigued with lecturing, he took a trip to California, Mr. Pullman furnishing him with a private car and personally seeing him and his party off from Chicago. The following summer, back at Concord, he "awoke one morning early, at half-past five, and saw a light in his closet." In three hours the house was gutted, the neighbors saving the books and the furniture. Shortly after this Emerson suffered a mild collapse, and a subscription was quickly raised to rebuild the house and send him abroad while the work was going on. He crossed the Atlantic for the third time, visiting England, Italy and

## HOME AND TRAVEL

Egypt, and returned to a triumphal reception and the new house in Concord. Emerson did not go abroad again. His travels were not expressions of restiveness with his home, but only quests for more knowledge. He told Whittier, "When I first open my eyes upon the morning meadows, and look out upon the beautiful world, I thank God that I am alive, and that I live so near Boston."

Whittier's family had lived in the same county since 1638, the same farm since 1647 and the same house since 1688; and Whittier remained essentially a local man of the same soil, without foreign influence or desire to travel. After his first busy years as a literary young man, he retired to Amesbury in his home county where he lived in "Wordsworthian content" with his sister, in a white—afterwards yellow—little house with green blinds and "a vine-wreathed piazza on one side, upon which opened the glass door of the 'garden room,' the poet's favourite sitting-room and study." Charlotte Forten Grimke, describing the house, continues in old rose vein: "The windows of this room looked out on a pleasant, old-fashioned garden. The walls on both sides of the fireplace were covered with books. The other walls were hung with pictures, among which we noticed 'The Barefoot Boy,' a painting of Mr. Whittier's birthplace in Haverhill, a copy of that lovely picture, 'The Motherless,' under which were written some exquisite lines by Mrs. Stowe, and a beautiful little sea-view, painted by a friend of the poet. Vases of fresh, bright flowers stood upon the mantelpiece. After we had rested we went into the little parlor, where hung the portrait of the loved . . . mother. . . . There were other pictures and books, and upon a table in the corner stood Rogers's 'Wounded Scout.' At the head of the staircase hung a great cluster of pansies, purple and white and gold. . . . In the cool, pleasant chamber assigned to us, pervaded by an air of Quaker serenity and purity, was a large painting of the poet in his youth."

Longfellow was a restless soul and a natural traveller. He first went abroad at twenty, taking thirty days to cross the Atlantic, falling in love successively with France—"settling down into something between a Frenchman and a New

Englander"—, Spain, Italy and Germany, and acquiring all of their languages with amazing rapidity and fluency. Returning, he was first Professor of Modern Languages at Bowdoin, then at Harvard, the latter university sending him abroad again, at twenty-seven, on which tour he added Swedish, Danish and Finnish to his repertoire, and only Dutch resisted him. Back in Cambridge he settled in handsome Craigie House, on Brattle Street, where Washington had made his headquarters during the siege of Boston. But "he was plainly restless. 'I do not like this sedentary life.' . . . 'I want action. I want travel.' . . . 'All my hours and days go to perishable things. College takes half the time; and other people and their interminable letters and requests and demands take the rest. . . . This is the extreme of folly; and if I knew a man far off in some foreign land, doing as I do here, I should say he was mad.' " When he was sixty-one he went abroad for the last time, and was fêted and honorarily doctored all over Europe. He died at home.

Holmes went abroad at eighty and had a triumphal "hundred days" in England.

Poe's house in Philadelphia was small, and slightly and cheaply furnished, but tastefully withal, under the authority of the aunt and mother-in-law, Mrs. Clemm. The cottage at Fordham, then a village thirteen miles from New York, was sparse with poverty. The sitting-room was carpeted in checked matting and was furnished with only "a light stand with presentation volumes of the Brownings upon it, some hanging shelves with a few other books ranged on them, and four chairs." This room was also Virginia's bedroom most of the time, and here she died.

Tennyson was insular and especially suspicious of the French. He and Hallam toured France and Spain when Tennyson was twenty-one, and the Pyrenees supplied him with most of the mountain scenery for his classical poems. But on returning, he quickly wrote, "I am struck on returning from France with the look of good sense in the London people." He went abroad once more, in 1846, touring Switzerland with Moxon, his publisher. After Hallam's death in 1832 Tennyson lived alone for several years at

Marblethorpe, in an isolated, orange-colored little cottage by the North Sea. In 1837 the family was forced to leave their old home at Somersby, and Tennyson managed their successive moves to Epping, to Tunbridge Wells and to Maidstone. During this period he often went on long walking trips alone, stopping at village inns. He married in 1850 and first took an isolated, flimsy little house in Sussex. The wall of the marital bedroom blew down in a storm; presently they learned that the place had been a Catholic chapel and that a baby was buried there, that one of a gang of thieves had inhabited it, that there was no postal delivery and that the nearest doctor and butcher were seven miles away. The place was too eerie for them and they departed, Tennyson drawing Mrs. Tennyson in a bath chair over a rough road to Cuckfield. At Farringford, on the Isle of Wight, Tennyson established the residence he required, far from the world. William Knight thus described the exterior: "In the avenue leading to the house, the spreading trees just opening into leaf, with spring flowers around and beneath—yellow cow-slips and blue forget-me-nots—and the song of birds in the branches overhead, seemed a fitting prelude to all that followed. . . . After a short stroll on the lawn under the cedars, we went into the 'careless ordered garden,' walked round it, and sat down in the small summer-house. It is a quaint rectangular garden, sloping to the west, where nature and art blend happily—orchard trees and old-fashioned flower-beds, with stately pines around, giving to it a sense of perfect rest, . . . a 'haunt of ancient peace.'" In the house Tennyson's lair was an attic room, where he housed most of his books.

If there was moral rigidity in the home of Mr. Barrett there was a good deal of architectural pliancy. In 1833, when the family was occupying a house at Sidworth, the chimney had to be pulled down to keep it from falling, and the masons cautioned the girls not to lean too far out of the windows, lest they carry the walls with them. In 1836 they were living at 74 Gloucester Place, when one day the chimney fell through the skylight into the entrance hall while Elizabeth and her brother were moralizing about shipwrecks.

Soon after this began the residence in Wimpole Street and Miss Barrett's confinement to her large darkened room where neither visitors nor sun nor night air were allowed to penetrate the closely drawn curtains, where no flowers could survive the funereal gloom, and where five busts were her principal companions, those of Homer and Chaucer presiding over the bookshelves, and three others over the wardrobe. The window offered small relief to the gloom of this room, but Miss Barrett made the most of it. She had a window box which, being in the outside air, teemed with scarlet runners, nasturtiums, convolvulus and ivy sprawling thence all over the wall of the house. The window was hung within with green damask curtains, usually drawn and very handsome when the sun shone through. Or if they were caught back there was a decorative shade with a castle painted on it, all very gay and making the best of the excluded sun. The principal furniture in the room was the bed, "like a sofa and no bed," and the arm-chair beside it.

Meanwhile, and until his marriage when he was thirty-five, Browning had no home except his father's. He made several sojourns abroad, especially in Italy, and seriously contemplated a diplomatic career. When he and Elizabeth Barrett eloped in 1846, they proceeded by carriage to Rouen, to Paris, to Orleans, to Avignon, to Marseilles and thence by boat to Pisa, where they settled in three large bedrooms and a sitting-room near the Leaning Tower. Their longest residence was in a suite in the Casa Guidi, in Florence, where they had "three immense rooms . . . and a fourth small one for a book room and winter room." Elizabeth adorned her room with pictures of the saints, Dante's profile, Keats's death-mask and large mirrors, and the walls of the dining-room carried medallions of Carlyle, Tennyson and Browning himself. After Mrs. Browning's death Browning returned to England to be near his wife's sister, and to give his son an English education. A visitor to his study in the DeVere Gardens house found him barricaded behind heaps of books, piled high on the floor, the chairs and the table. When he was seventy-seven, again travelling in Italy, he negotiated to buy a ruined house at Asolo, and proposed to call it

“Pippa’s Tower.” The sale went through the day of his death.

Fitzgerald lived determinedly alone in the midst of his flat Suffolk country with its slow-moving streams and no hills anywhere. Although he enjoyed considerable holdings, he always lived in the most modest quarters. For ten years he had lodgings over the shop of the Woodbridge gunsmith, Mr. Berry. That gentleman having engaged himself to a widow, Fitzgerald remarked injudiciously that, “Old Berry would now have to be called ‘Old Gooseberry,’ ” and the future Mrs. Berry getting intelligence of this comment, the recluse was forced to quit his lodgings. Thereafter he inhabited a cottage in which he arranged a comfortable study packed with books, pictures, pipes, sticks, a piano, a bust of Shakespeare in a nook, and a barrel of beer in the corner.

Lowell inhabited the family mansion, completely obscured behind hedges and “noble elms.”

Wherever Whitman lived he always had in his room a line drawing of Silenus and another of Bacchus. In the Brooklyn house his room contained nothing but these, a cot, a small wash-stand and a pine table, and the single window opened on a barren plain. This two-story house he built with his own hands while editing *The Freeman*, the ground floor designed as a printing office, and the upper floor housing the family. After Whitman’s stroke, when he was fifty-three, he lived for a while with his prosperous brother, George, in Camden, and when the latter moved to a larger house he offered Walt a whole sunshiny upper floor to himself. Other friends likewise urged him to live with them. But Whitman preferred his independence and bought with his only \$1750 the little Camden house, where he lived in the utmost squalor and without furniture until he persuaded Mrs. Davis to move in with hers. The place was horridly located, being noisy with proximity to the ferry, the railroad station and the street-car line, and nauseous with a nearby guano factory. Whitman exulted in the possession of a lilac tree in the back yard and a shade tree in the tiny front yard under which he liked to sit. His room, upstairs at the front, was a sort of replica of the news-

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paper offices of his youth, the floor being deep in miscellanies from which he would fish out dexterously with his cane whatever he wanted. Noticeable in this room, as preserved today, is the big, shallow, round, old-fashioned, black tin bath-tub. Downstairs a feature of the house is Mrs. Davis's clock, showing, on the glass door, the remains of cherries once painted there and gradually picked away by her parrot who stands stuffed in a case nearby. Whitman's only travels beyond Washington and Boston were his journey to New Orleans to work on *The Crescent*, in his late twenties, and a later trip to the same city, presumably to visit his former inamorata there.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood habitually met in the attic of Rossetti's house on the Strand, Chelsea, furnished with no carpet, three or four broken chairs and a sofa. His own bedroom, both here and in the later residence, was gloomy with black curtains covering all the windows, a big crucifix with candles before it, and bottles of chloral standing about. After his wife's death he moved to Tudor House, 16 Cheyne Walk, where he resided for the rest of his life —a big, comfortable place with an acre of garden. Swinburne, Meredith and Rossetti's brother sub-let rooms here and all dined together, until Rossetti became too domineering and, one by one, his sub-tenants departed. Rossetti had a library of about 1000 volumes, including 100 Dumas and some incunabula.

Christina Rossetti spent her life in attendance upon her mother.

When Morris was thirty-seven he rented the Kelmscott Manor House in Lochdale—hence the Kelmscott Press. Though this remained his residence for life he mostly lived and worked in rooms in London.

After her father died Emily Dickinson never sortied for eight years, even into the village, the front porch and the garden marking the limits of her explorations.

For forty years Meredith lived in the same little house at Box Hill, Surrey, more or less buried in flowers.

When Swinburne was forty he had a large sitting-room and a bedroom at 3 St. James's Place. The sitting-room con-

tained a mosaic-topped table, a swinging pier-glass, the famous tall candlesticks and a picture of his hero, Orsini.

When Burroughs was twenty-seven he went to Washington in search of work and adventure. At the outset "he slept in a store, on a camp cot with army blankets. When his pillow-case was soiled he turned it the other side up, and when that was soiled washed it, and also his clothing, at the sink in the store." While living here he wrote his first bird article, which was accepted by *The Atlantic*. Later he lived permanently on a farm.

Once while Stevenson was a discontented student at the University of Edinburgh the Premier of New Zealand spent an evening with his father and talked about the South Sea Islands until the boy was "sick to go there." Before his dream was realized he did a lot of promiscuous globe-trotting. Before he was twenty-nine he had spent long sojourns in Barbizon, Grez and Paris. At twenty-nine he went to California, returned and subsequently spent two summers in Scotland, two winters in Davos, some months in Marseilles, a year in Hyères, three years at Bournemouth, a year in the Adirondacks, sailed from San Francisco when thirty-eight, took three successive voyages among the South Sea Islands and finally settled in Samoa in 1890, building his house, Vailima, on the island of Upolu, and died there in 1894. The word "Vailima" means in Samoan "five waters," there being five streams running through the property. The house was located on a plateau, 700 feet above the sea, about 3 miles back of Apia, the principle port of the Samoan Islands, and was surrounded by the densest tropical jungle. It was of wood, painted dark green, with a red roof. The great hall was 60 feet long, with mullioned windows and lined with California redwood. The furniture was partly brought from Scotland and consisted partly of treasures presented to Stevenson by the island kings—corselets, fans, war dresses, mats, etc. Until the natives, grateful for Stevenson's kindness, built him a broad highway, the only approach to the house was by a jungle path.

After Francis Thompson was discovered and saved by Meynell he spent two years recovering in Stonington Priory,

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and here he did his best work. During the next two years he generally spent the part of each day when he was out of bed at the Meynells' house at Palace Court, and his nights in lodgings of his own near the squalid haunts of his dark period. Around his room he pinned reproductions of portraits of the poets. From 1892 to 1896 he lived near the Monastery of Pantasaph, Wales, and was on intimate terms with the friars there.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Page 161, Marvell. See his trip to Russia, *The Struggle for Existence*, p. 321.

Page 162, Savage. See his behavior in the house of Lord Tyrconnel, *The Struggle for Integrity*, pp. 342-3.

Pages 167-8, Coleridge. As Wordsworth's guest, see *Friendship and Sociability*, pp. 122-3.

Page 178, Dickinson. See her trip to Washington, *Love*, p. 458.

## DOMESTIC HABITS, CROTCHETS AND ACCIDENTS

Chaucer, "when he had done his official work for the day, and 'made his reckonings,' . . . used to go home and become wholly absorbed in his books, 'hearing neither this nor that'; and, 'in stead of rest and new things' (recreation), he would 'sit at a book, as dumb as a stone, till his look was dased'; and thus did he 'live as a hermit, though (unlike a hermit) his abstinence was little.'" But, on the other hand, "So great was his love of nature, that, 'when the month of May is come, and I hear the birds sing, and see the flowers springing up, farewell then to my book and to my devotion' to reading."

In Milton's youth he habitually read late into the night, but in his mature years he changed his routine, sleeping from nine to four in the summer and from nine to five in the winter. After his blindness, that is, during the epic period, the course of his day was as follows: on rising had

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a chapter read to him from the Hebrew Bible; contemplated till seven; then his man came and read to him and took his dictation until twelve; then took some exercise for an hour, either walking in the garden or swinging in a "machine"; dined; played the organ or the bass viol, or sang, or had his wife sing to him, she having a good voice and a bad ear; then to his study, and more reading or dictation until six; received visitors until eight, usually sitting at the door of his house wearing a "gray, coarse, cloth coat"; supped, usually on olives or something light, being abstemious on account of gout; then a pipe of tobacco, a glass of water, and so to bed, about nine. It is also recorded that he often sat at unspecified times "in the sun" at the door of his house. For the purpose of being read to, Milton sometimes hired a young student, sometimes used his friends or one of his three daughters whom he taught to pronounce five or six languages, though they understood nothing of what they read to him.

Swift, after flunking for his A.B., studied eight hours a day for seven years.

Addison, before his marriage, always breakfasted with one of his friends, often having one or more of them—notably Budgell or Phillips—staying with him in the house. After breakfast he studied all morning, dined at some tavern, then went to Button's, a coffee-house "on the south side of Russell Street about two doors from Covent Garden." Here he was king and, when vexed, would withdraw practically the whole company elsewhere. From the coffee-house he went again to some tavern "where he often sat late and drank too much wine." He was fastidious about his linen. As a young man he frequently stayed in penny-lodgings, but always indulged himself to the extent of clean sheets, a luxury for which an extra charge was made. Once, in Dresden, he "found the country-side covered in a blanket of snow, so that everything was of an unrelieved white—except for his sheets and table linen."

Pope, driving home one night from Dalley in Bolingbroke's carriage, was upset in a stream and escaped drowning although the water was "up to the knot in his periwig."

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But he was so cut by broken glass that he nearly lost the use of his right hand.

Young was extremely methodical in his domestic and studious routine. When he decided to take orders he applied for advice, not to divines, but to Pope, who recommended Thomas Aquinas. Young disappeared into the suburbs for six months, and Pope, worried about him, sought him out and discovered him just in time to prevent an "irretrievable derangement." He had a habit of dog-earing passages he liked and returning to them a second time. Many of his books were so swelled by this practice that they would not shut.

"Fenton was . . . very sluggish and sedentary, rose late. . . . A woman, that once waited on him in a lodging, told him . . . that he would lie a-bed and be fed with a spoon. . . . Pope says, in his letters, that he died of indolence. . . ."

Johnson thus describes the domestic habits of Savage by which he gradually wore out his welcome in house after house of his one-time friends: "He was sometimes so far compassionated by those who knew both his merit and his distresses, that they received him into their families, but they soon discovered him to be a very incommodious inmate; for being always accustomed to an irregular manner of life, he could not confine himself to any stated hours, or pay any regard to the rules of the family, but would prolong his conversation till midnight, without considering that business might require his friend's application in the morning; and, when he had persuaded himself to retire to bed, was not, without equal difficulty, called to dinner; it was therefore impossible to pay him any distinction without the entire subversion of all economy, a kind of establishment which, wherever he went, he always appeared ambitious to overthrow."

Warburton collected fifty-five unpublished Elizabethan-Jacobean dramas, all of which were destroyed by his cook for culinary purposes.

Goldsmith had no respect for books. He habitually tore out leaves instead of transcribing passages.

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Gray had an abnormal terror of fire and when he was living at Peterhouse got Wharton to supply him with a sixty-five-foot rope ladder with strong hooks which he fastened to a bar across his window—which bar remains there to this day. One chill February night some undergraduates, aware of his pyrophobia, shouted, “Fire!”, on his stair-case. The timid Gray hastily threw out his rope ladder and descended through the darkness and cold in his night-clothes, only to drop into a carefully placed tub of water. He fell to shivering, a night-watchman covered him with his coat, and a stone-hewer carried him back, up the stairs, to his rooms.

Cowper and the Reverend and Mrs. Unwin, with whom he lived, were typical revivalists of the late eighteenth century. Cowper wrote that they did not “murder their time” at cards and dancing. “As to amusements—what the world calls such—we have none. . . . We breakfast between 8 and 9; till 11, we read either the Scripture or the sermons of some faithful preacher of these holy mysteries; at 11 we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day; from twelve to three we separate to amuse ourselves as we please. . . . After dinner we adjourn to the garden, where, with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors or sing some hymns of Marin’s collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin’s harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best performers. After tea we . . . walk in good earnest. . . . At night we read and converse as before till supper, and last of all the family are called to prayers. . . . We are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren.” While Cowper was living with Hayley, his picture was painted by Romney.

At Abbotsford, Scott rose early, wrote all morning, spent the afternoons riding over the estate, thinning and lopping the trees, and usually entertained in the evening.

There seems to have been no special routine in any of Wordsworth’s *ménages*, no set hours for anything. The sufficient law of the house was that William, and at least

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one of his little harem to whom he was dictating, should be working all of the time when not specifically summoned by nature to eat or sleep, or by common courtesy to receive a caller. Wordsworth was never much of a reader, and once he confessed in a letter from Grasmere: "We live quite out of the way of new books. I have not seen a single one since I came here, now thirteen months ago." The most frequent guest at Dove Cottage was, of course, Coleridge. Dorothy records a typical afternoon and evening: "Coleridge went to bed after tea. . . . We borrowed some bottles for boiling rum. . . . I broiled Coleridge a mutton chop which he ate in bed. William was gone to bed. I chatted with John [Wordsworth] and Coleridge till nearly twelve." Wordsworth and Coleridge often floated on Grasmere Lake in a boat reading their poems to one another.

Coleridge was always a tremendous reader. While he was a student at Christ's Hospital, he used to spend his free time wandering aimlessly about London, shivering in front of the windows of book-shops and print-shops. Once, while so standing, he got, in his own words, "absent-mindedly involved" with "the coat-tail pocket" of a stranger, who "at first took him for a thief, then was so charmed by his conversation that he made him free of a library in Cheap-side." Thenceforth "he would run all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes to which he was entitled daily." Coleridge, of course, had no regularity in his home. He was forever spilling snuff on the carpet and was consistent in nothing but continuous talk. In a letter of 1797 he wrote: "The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara (his wife) accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of Charles Lamb's stay. . . ."

Byron was an irregular but, in his own words, an omnivorous reader: "I was never seen reading—the truth is that I read eating, read in bed, read when no one else read, . . . since I was five years old." He claimed that he read a chapter of the Bible every day. Byron was also a great tooth-brusher, and passionately addicted to "Waite's red tooth powders."

The main pattern of Shelley's life was an alternation of sleeping and reading. He was, in fact, always fatigued from night reading, and had a habit of falling asleep by day, anywhere, suddenly, like a child. At Oxford he read about sixteen out of every twenty-four hours, his eyes always in a book when eating or when walking, whether in country lanes or on the streets. Hogg, his intimate during his year at university, describes his evening habits thus: "I was enabled to continue my studies in the evening in consequence of a very remarkable peculiarity. My young and energetic friend was then overcome by extreme drowsiness, which speedily and completely vanquished him; he would sleep from two to four hours, often so soundly that his slumbers resembled a deep lethargy; he lay occasionally upon the sofa, but more commonly stretched on the rug before the large fire, like a cat, and his little round head was exposed to such fierce heat, that I used to wonder how he was able to bear it. Sometimes I have interposed some shelter, but rarely with any permanent effect, for the sleeper usually contrived to turn himself, and to roll again into the spot where the fire glowed the brightest. His torpor was generally profound, but he would sometimes discourse incoherently for a long while in his sleep. At six he would suddenly compose himself, even in the midst of an animated narrative or of an earnest discussion, and he would lie buried in entire forgetfulness, in a sweet and mighty oblivion until ten, when he would suddenly start up and, rubbing his eyes with great violence and passing his fingers swiftly through his long hair, would enter at once into a vehement argument, or begin to recite verses, either of his own composition or from the works of others, with a rapidity and an energy that were often quite painful. During the period of his occultation I took tea, and read or wrote without interruption. He would sometimes sleep for a shorter time, for about two hours, postponing for the like period the commencement of his retreat to the rug, and rising with tolerable punctuality at ten, and sometimes, though rarely, he was able entirely to forego the accustomed refreshment." At ten Hogg and Shelley would have supper, then would talk

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and read together until two. During the period of Shelley's greatest privation, in the autumn of 1814, under-nourished, an outcast, living in mean rooms in hiding from his creditors, disappearing at the sound of any footfall on the stair and leaving Mary to dispose of the visitor, he and she averaged, in their reading, rather more than a book a day each, for several months. Jane Williams recorded that Shelley, in the Shelley-Williams palazzo in Pisa, "comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where." His routine was to be "up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza, with the accompaniment of a hunch of bread; then he joined Williams in a sail on the Arno in a flat-bottomed boat, book in hand, and from thence went into the pine-forest, or some out-of-the-way place. When the birds went to roost he returned home, and talked and read until midnight." It was his habit at this time to read standing, where possible. Trelawney reported that he left Shelley at ten one morning, standing at the mantel in his study, reading; and returning at six, found him in the same position, still reading, looking pale and exhausted.

Keats, during his most methodical period as the guest of Bailey at Oxford, composed from breakfast till two or three o'clock, wrote letters or read for an hour or two, then went out with Bailey for a walk. When he was dying in Naples he read all of *Clarissa Harlowe*, in nine volumes, in a week.

Each morning after breakfast, Emerson habitually spent an hour in his orchard, pruning the trees, and stirring the earth around his shrubs. He also received his intimate friends here, in the afternoon.

Very, far gone in mysticism, "considered it an honor to wash his own face (the temple of his soul)."

Whittier, being color-blind, was "never permitted, by the guardian goddess of his hearth, to go shopping for himself, but . . . once, being in Boston, and needing a carpet, he had ventured to go to a store and buy what he thought to be a very nice, quiet article, precisely suited to adorn a Quaker home. When it arrived at Amesbury there was a universal shout of horror, for what had struck Mr. Whittier as a particularly soft combination of browns and grays proved,

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to normal eyes, to be a loud pattern of bright red roses on a field of the crudest cabbage-green. This carpet was, however, put to use in an upstairs room. Gosse describes a visit to him there when Whittier was seventy-seven: "Doubtless in leafy season Oak Knoll may have its charms, but it was distinctly sinister that December morning. We rang; after a long pause the front door opened slightly; a very unprepossessing dog emerged, and shut the door (if I may say so) behind him. We were face to face with this animal, which presented none of the features identified in one's mind with the idea of Mr. Whittier. It sniffed unpleasantly, but we spoke to it most blandly and it became assured that we were not tramps. The dog sat down, and looked at us; we had nowhere to sit down, but we looked at the dog. Then, after many blandishments, but feeling very uncomfortable, I ventured to hold the dog in conversation while I rang again. After another pause the door was slightly opened, and a voice of no agreeable timbre asked what we wanted. We explained, across the dog, that we had come by appointment to see Mr. Whittier. The door was closed a second time, and if our carriage had still been waiting, we would certainly have driven back to Danvers. But at length a hard-featured woman grudgingly admitted us, and showed us, growling as she did it, into the parlour. Our troubles were then over, for Mr. Whittier himself appeared, with all that report had ever told us of a gentle sweetness and dignified cordial courtesy."

There was a sort of "ominous etiquette" built up around the great man at Farringford, where Tennyson would "loom through the door" at frightened pilgrims and "growl through his mane and beard." He was always crotchety around the house, especially when pestered—and he was unbelievably pestered—by lion-hunters. But he would always mellow with port, then take the guests to his attic room, where he would light a pipe and pass it to them. Presently they would descend to the ladies in the drawing-room, where there would be more port, and Tennyson would read.

In Italy the Brownings always stayed at home evenings,

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for Elizabeth could not go out, and Robert would not leave her. Sometimes they had friends in for hot chestnuts and mulled wine. Browning could never sit still, and always wore holes in the carpet with the shuffling of his feet.

Fitzgerald habitually roamed about his cottage and garden in a dressing gown and slippers.

On one occasion Lowell invited a distinguished guest to dinner. When he told his wife she said they had nothing for dinner but fish. Lowell explained to his guest that they dined very simply; but when the fish was passed the visitor said, "If you don't mind I shall omit the fish course." Lowell read a minimum of four hours a day.

One summer Burroughs sat to Pietro, the sculptor, in the open field, for the larger-than-life figure now in the Toledo Art Museum. One morning the sculptor found that the cows had eaten away a part of the figure, to his great dismay over the loss of the clay. While sitting, Burroughs would sometimes jump up suddenly, seize his gun, chase something into a distant field, bag his specimen, and return to his sitting.

Once in his family's house Rossetti came on the maid using his translations of Italian poets to light the fire. While he had the toothache he designed a monogram for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, using up all the notepaper in the house for the purpose. Painting *Found* at Ford Madox Brown's, he made himself objectionable, sleeping on the floor of the parlor till eleven, demanding food and turpentine, painting slowly, wearing Brown's great-coat and his breeches, and refusing to go home when Brown suggested it. They were in great poverty and Mrs. Brown was nearing her time.

Morris at Oxford was known as "Mad Morris" because of his habit of banging his head against the wall just for fun. All his life he hated mirrors and avoided them. But he liked draughts, and sat in them by preference.

During Meredith's active life he always walked up Box Hill—about four miles—and back every morning. In his old age he made the same daily round in his little donkey-chaise, leaving the house promptly at 10:40, accompanied

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by Miss Nicholls, his nurse, while his old attendant, Cole, led the donkey. After indulging for a short time in the view from Box Hill, he returned, always reaching the house promptly at 12:50.

Swinburne, in his rooms at 3 St. James's Place, had a portrait of his hero Orsini, before which, in the presence of visitors, he would do a sort of solemn dance, jumping up and trying to kiss it. After Watts-Dunton took Swinburne to Putney his habits became absolutely regular: rose in the mid-morning; walk always the same; dinner; nap, 2:30—4:30; composed for a while; read for the rest of the day.

Emily Dickinson was a great learner of popular songs, a student of newspapers and a reader of the dictionary, over and over, page by page. Her most frequent occupation was the making of cake and caramels to be sent to friends and neighbors.

In one of his lodgings Francis Thompson habitually walked around the table all night and went to bed at dawn. Finally he wore out the carpet in a perfect circle round his table. He habitually stayed in bed most of the day and never kept appointments. Wherever he was he always sought the fire and stood against it, forever getting his trousers and his coat afire. Once, in his lodging, he set the curtains afire and tipped over the lamp in trying to extinguish it. His hands were badly burned and he walked the streets all night, for, as he later remarked, "the room was quite burned out."

Stevenson in Samoa arose daily at six or earlier, worked all morning, and spent the afternoon in riding, walking in the forest, or joining in the native sports.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Savage (not mentioned in this section). See his behavior in the house of Lord Tyrconel, *The Struggle for Integrity*, pp. 342-3.

Wilkie (not mentioned in this section). See his sleeping under two dozen blankets, *Looks and Manners*, p. 73.

Page 184, Coleridge. See his slovenliness in Wordsworth's house, *Friendship and Sociability*, pp. 122-3.

Page 189, Thompson. See signs around his bed to rouse him, *Miscellaneous Aberrations*, p. 476.

*LITTLE INDULGENCES*

The excesses of the poets, wherein indulgence or its contrary, asceticism, is raised to extremity, will be discussed in the section on "Excesses." Here will be mentioned only such matters as food, tobacco, alcohol and gambling in moderation, and sensuousness that falls short of sensuality.

Chaucer's diplomatic service under Edward III was so far satisfactory that in 1374 he was granted as reward a pitcher of wine daily, to be received from the king's butler; and in 1398 Richard II granted him a tun of wine yearly for his lifetime. Chaucer left on record that his "abstinence was little."

There are stories of a drinking bout that immediately preceded Shakespeare's sudden departure from Stratford—presumably because of a deerslaying incident—when he was twenty. Also Ben Jonson and Drayton were with him in Stratford forty-two years later on the evening before he died, and thence also arose vinous rumors. But most of the evidence obtainable, meager as it is, tends to indicate that Shakespeare was temperate for the times.

When Donne was dying the great physician Doctor Simion Foxe told him he might be restored "by cordials and drinking milk twenty days together"; but the Dean loathed milk and "passionately refused to drink it." Upon the doctor's insisting, he did try it for ten days, then said he would rather die than continue, since he didn't fear death. And he did die shortly thereafter.

In spite of his philosophy of indulgence, Herrick was apparently not at his best in his cups. He often "quaffed the mighty bowl" of canary sack with Ben Jonson, being one of his "sons," but admitted that he could not "thrive in frenzy."

Suckling was "considered the best bowler and card-player in England; and his sisters, it is said, distressed and alarmed at his passion for gambling, came one day to the Picadilly bowling-green, 'crying for fear he should lose all their portions.'"

Milton's palate was moderate. "His domestick habits, so

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far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without excess in quantity, and in his early years without delicacy of choice."

Marvell was quite a gambler, and usually lost. Also he liked his wine and was moderate in the use of it.

Pope's table was a paradox of parsimony and hospitality, of fastidious taste and a finicky digestion. When he was a young man he liked to give out that he was a great rake, but every one knew that more than one glass of wine would confine him to bed in the morning. Swift once wrote him, "Two bites of a sup more than your stint will cost you more than others pay for a regular debauch." Yet he pampered his appetite with highly seasoned dishes, liked to receive delicacies as presents from his friends, and in spite of headaches he always got up for dinner. Some imputed his death to "a silver saucepan in which it was his delight to eat potted lampreys." His hospitality was unpredictable. Sometimes he would put on a fine banquet. But Swift reported that once when he was entertaining two friends and four glasses had been consumed from a pint of wine, Pope suddenly retired, saying, "Gentlemen, I leave you to your wine." His one unrestrained indulgence was coffee, which soothed his headaches.

A lady once told Savage, who was a great friend of Thomson's, that she knew from the latter's work "that he was a great Lover, a great Swimmer, and rigorously abstinent; but, said Savage, he knows not any love but that of the sex; he was perhaps never in cold water in his life; and he indulges himself in all the luxury that comes within his reach." Thomson at Richmond had a fine cellar of wine and Scotch ale.

Gray was abstemious and twitted by his enemies for over-daintiness in appetite. Sage-tea was his favorite indulgence.

Goldsmit gambled away most of the money that came into his hands. When his uncle gave him £50 to study law, he immediately lost it in a game.

Landor was a gourmet in the Roman manner. He said that "to dine in company with more than two is a Gaulish and a German thing." Habitually he ate alone, with half-

closed shutters, because the light interfered with the taste.

Byron reported that on the day he came of age he "dined on eggs and bacon and a bottle of ale for once in a way. For they are my favorite dish and drinkable, but as neither of them agrees with me, I never use them but on great jubilees—once in four or five years or so." There is the well-known story of Byron, riding through Europe in his coach, with a goose tied to the under-carriage, fattening for his table. This may have been true on one occasion, but generally Byron's talk in these matters exceeded his performance, and his place on the whole is surely on the side of the abstemious poets. Writing of his frequent boasts of being a heavy and manly drinker, his friend Trelawney reports that "of all his vauntings, it was, luckily for him, the emptiest, . . . From all that I heard or witnessed of his habits abroad he was and had been exceedingly abstemious in eating and drinking. When alone, he drank a glass or two of small claret or hock, and when utterly exhausted at night, a single glass of grog; which when I mixed it for him I lowered to what sailors call 'water bewitched,' and he never made any remark. I once, to try him, omitted the alcohol; he then said, 'Tre, have you not forgotten the creature comfort?' I then put in two spoonfuls, and he was satisfied. This does not look like an habitual toper. His English acquaintances in Italy were, he said in derision, all milksops. On the rare occasion of any of his former friends visiting him, he would urge them to have a carouse with him, but they had grown wiser. He used to say that little Tommy Moore was the only man he knew who stuck to the bottle and put him on his mettle, adding, 'But he is a native of the damp isle, where men subsist by suction.' Byron had not damaged his body by strong drink, but his terror of getting fat was so great that he reduced his diet to the point of absolute starvation. . . . When he added to his weight, even standing was painful, so he resolved to keep down to eleven stone, or shoot himself. He said everything he swallowed was instantly converted into tallow and deposited on his ribs. He was the only human being I ever met with who had sufficient self-restraint and resolution to

resist this proneness to fatten: he did so, and at Genoa, where he was last weighed, he was ten stone and nine pounds, and looked much less. . . . As he was always hungry, his merit was the greater. Occasionally he relaxed his vigilance, when he swelled apace. I remember one of his old friends saying, 'Byron, how well you are looking!' If he had stopped there it had been well, but when he added, 'You are getting fat,' Byron's brow reddened, and his eye flashed—'Do you call getting fat looking well, as if I were a hog?' and, turning to me, he muttered, 'The beast, I can hardly keep my hands off him.' . . . I don't think he had much appetite for his dinner that day, or for many days, and never forgave the man. . . . He would exist on biscuits and soda-water for days together, then, to allay the eternal hunger gnawing at his vitals, he would make up a horrid mess of cold potatoes, rice, fish, or greens, deluged in vinegar, and gobble it up like a famished dog. On either of these unsavoury dishes, with a biscuit and glass or two of Rhine wine, he cared not how sour, he called feasting sumptuously. Upon my observing he might as well have fresh fish and vegetables, instead of stale, he laughed and answered: 'I have an advantage over you, I have no palate; one thing is as good as another to me.' His habits and want of exercise damaged him, not drink." Byron did not smoke.

Shelley had "for all the sensualities of the table . . . an ineffable contempt, and, like Newton, used sometimes to inquire if he had dined." He was vegetarian, believing that "abstinence from animal food subtilizes and clears the intellect." Bread was his staff of life. When he felt hungry he would rush into a bake shop, emerge with a loaf under his arm, and stride on rapidly breaking off pieces and swallowing them greedily. While visiting Shelley, his friend Hogg once ventured to say something about a pudding. "A pudding," said Shelley, "is a prejudice." He did sometimes permit Harriet or Mary to supply a "murdered chicken" for a guest.

In 1819 Keats, though already tubercular, further weakened himself by going vegetarian, in order "that my brains may never henceforth be in a greater mist than is theirs

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by nature." But Keats, unlike Shelley, was not only no ascetic in matters of the senses, but he was a sensationalist both in impulse and by philosophy. His powerful moral instincts kept him from sensuality, but he was abnormally sensitive in matters of color, taste, smell and touch. Amy Lowell says that "sensation was not to him a mere material thing, but the rift in the clouds through which he glimpsed the heavenly hosts." There is the incident of his having once sprinkled cayenne pepper on his tongue in order to enjoy more the taste of claret. There are the two following excerpts from his letters to his sister Fanny: "I got to the stage half an hour before it set out and counted the buns and tarts in a Pastry-cook's window and was just beginning with the Jellies . . ."; and again, this burst of fancy: "I should like now to promenade round your gardens—apple-tasting—pear-tasting—plum-judging—apricot-nibbling—peach-scrunching—nectarine-sucking and Melon-carving. I have also a great feeling for antiquated cherries full of sugar cracks—and a white currant tree kept for company. I admire lolling on a lawn by a water lilyed pond to eat white curants and see gold fish: and to go to the Fair in the Evening if I'm good. . . ." During his last months in Italy Severn reports that Keats was "never tired of admiring, (not to speak of eating!) the beautiful clusters of grapes and other fruits, and was scarce less enthusiastic over the autumnal flowers. . . ." In Naples "he was driving with my friend Charles Cottrell from the Bourbon Museum, up the beautiful open road which leads up to Capo di Monte and the Ponte Rossi. On the way, in front of a villa or cottage, he was struck and moved by the sight of some rose-trees in full bearing. Thinking to gratify the invalid, Cottrell . . . jumped out of the carriage, spoke to somebody about the house or garden, and was back in a trice with a bouquet of roses. 'How late in the year! What an exquisite climate!' said the Poet; but on putting them to his nose, he threw the flowers down on the opposite seat, and exclaimed: 'Humbugs! They have no scent! What is a rose without its fragrance? I hate and abhor all humbug, whether in a flower or in a man or woman!' And having worked himself

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strongly up in the anti-humbug humour, he cast the bouquet on the road." On the way from Naples to Rome, Severn kept Keats's carriage filled with flowers, and he would rally out of listlessness as they came into a fine prospect or the wind brought a breath of vegetation from the hills or of salt from the sea. But all of this sensuousness of Keats was only an intellectualization, a poetic projection of his imagination, and a far cry from wallowing in a sensualist sty. Keats enjoyed wine but was a light drinker. Only in his tubercular delirium did he approach sensuality in his attitude toward women. He took snuff but there is no record of his having smoked.

Tennyson acquired the habit of port during his middle period, before his marriage, while habitually bohemianizing at the Cock Tavern; and port and a pipe, never a cigar, became a necessary part of his intellectual normalcy. In his advanced years he was truculent about his diet. Max Mueller describes his behavior as an unexpected dinner and breakfast guest, when the market was closed. "My wife, a young housekeeper, did her best for our unexpected guest. He was known to be a gourmand, and at dinner he was evidently put out by finding the sauce with the salmon was not the one he preferred. He was pleased, however, with the wing of a chicken, and said that it was the only advantage he got from being a poet laureate, that he generally received the liver-wing of a chicken. The next morning at breakfast, we had rather plumed ourselves on having been able to get a dish of cutlets, and were not a little surprised, when our guest arrived, to see him whip off the cover of a hot dish, and to hear the exclamation, 'Mutton chops! the staple of every bad inn in England.'" And—again quoting Mueller—"his pipe was almost indispensable to him, and I remember one time when I and several friends were staying at his house, the question of tobacco turned up. . . . Some of his friends taunted Tennyson that he could never give up tobacco. 'Anybody can do that,' he said, 'if he chooses to do it.' When his friends still continued to doubt and to tease him, 'Well,' he said, 'I shall give up smoking from tonight.' The very same evening I was told that he threw his tobacco and his pipes

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out of the window of his bedroom. The next day he was most charming, though somewhat self-righteous. The second day he became very moody and captious, the third day no one knew what to do with him. But after a disturbed night I was told that he got out of bed in the morning, went quietly into the garden, picked up one of his broken pipes, stuffed it with the remains of the tobacco scattered about, and then having had a few puffs, came to breakfast, all right again."

When Browning was twelve he read Shelley, became a vegetarian for two years, and supposed himself an atheist. Later he wrote to his future wife that once he had lived for two years on bread and potatoes. After their marriage they always dined simply, either in restaurants or having the meals sent in, some fruit and ice water often making a meal. Elizabeth wrote that Robert "never touches a cigar."

While in New Orleans Whitman acquired, temporarily, a taste for good food, and the habit of sipping sherry cobblers and mild French brandy in the lobby of the Frémont Hotel. Though he was never excessive, he always liked to drink with the boys; but he did not smoke.

Rossetti had no discrimination in his food, wanting only to be filled. Once as he sat down to dinner and was served soup he exclaimed, "I say, what a stunning plate!" and turned it over to look at the mark, showing astonishment at the drenching he got.

Emily Dickinson not only made excellent caramels but feasted on them herself.

Meredith was a gourmet, his table always loaded with delicacies, and he would regale his guests with zest on the qualities of each dish.

Francis Thompson usually had a pipe in his mouth, presumably to smoke, and he was always lighting cords of matches, each one going out before he could get his pipe lighted.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Page 190, Shakespeare. See statement of his temperance, *Friendship and Sociability*, p. 107.

## P E T S

Pages 190-1, Milton. See his diet, *Domestic Habits, Crotchets and Accidents*, p. 181.

Page 191, Marvell. Prudence in drinking, *Friendship and Sociability*, p. 111.

Cowley (not mentioned in this section). See his fatal spree with Dean Sprat, *Death*, p. 266.

## PETS

Thus far in this book I have ventured to make two general statements about poets: the first, that the poetic virus is self-preoccupation; the second, that poverty in childhood is not beneficial to that virus. To these two I would now add a third hypothesis, that poets like pets. The basic reason for this predisposition is perhaps that a pet is a sort of companion that not only fails to invade or disturb the sacred ego but even, through being helpless and dependent, flatters it. Elsewhere we shall find that poets generally do not like the responsibility of human dependents, preferring themselves to be mothered, spoiled and practically looked after. But the dependence of an animal is so easily met, with an occasional plate of something and a little water, that a pet, while having the virtues of a member of the family, rarely offers any of the disadvantages. When an animal is sick it usually and conveniently dies, or must, humanely, be "put out of its misery." If it becomes savage or vindictive it must, "for the protection of society," be killed.

There are two types of pets, and I assert, without the means of proving my assertion, that poets are, as a class, more addicted to both than other people are. There are affectionate pets—typically the dog—whose appeal is to the "human" or companionable emotions; and poets, reciprocally, are usually very affectionate people. Then there are bizarre pets—snakes, rare birds, wombats and the like—whose appeal is to the fancy, the love of the strange; and poets are usually fanciful, or even fantastic people. Altogether, from the point of view both of primary and secondary poetic qualities, the pet is a desirable member of the poet's *ménage*. And so, in the majority of cases, we find him installed there.

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As in the case of most basic laws, there are, of course, exceptions, and—although evidence on the point is inconclusive—I suspect that they will be found mostly among the subjective or “egotistical sublime” poets, the Miltons, the Wordsworths and the Shelleys. Also, we may expect to find among these the favorers of bizarre beasts; while the objective poets—like Burns and Cowper and Elizabeth Barrett—are likely to prefer the more domestic and personable pets.

Pope loved his dog, had a genuine tenderness for all animals, hated hunting and bloodshed, and wrote a paper in *The Guardian* against cruelty to animals.

Burns had a collie named Thurlow. When he was a revenue officer he used to encourage Thurlow, who was well known throughout the countryside, to run a quarter of a mile or so ahead of him, that the moonshiners might be warned of his approach.

Cowper kept tame hares, housing them in boxes he made himself, and took pride in having spiritually reconciled hare, man and dog.

— Scott was devoted to animals, especially horses and dogs. His greyhounds Douglas and Percy and his bull terrier Camp were constantly with him. Camp was virtually human in his understanding of language. Scott’s servant would say, “Camp, the Sheriff’s coming home by the ford,” or “The Sheriff’s coming home by the hills”; and Camp would trot off to meet his master by the Tweed or the Glenkinnon burn. Camp was buried by moonlight in the garden opposite Scott’s study window. Much later Scott’s daughter told Irving that “Papa cried when Camp died.” In the dark days of the insolvency, Scott, having determined to leave Abbotsford and settle to work in Edinburgh, wrote thus in his journal: “My dogs will wait for me in vain. It is foolish, but the thoughts of parting from these dumb creatures have moved me more than any of the painful reflections I have put down. Poor things, I must get them kind masters; there may yet be those who loving me may love my dog because it has been mine. I must end this, or I shall lose the tone of mind with which men should meet distress. I find my dogs’ feet on my knees. I hear them whining and seeking me everywhere—

this is nonsense, but it is what they would do could they know how things are."

Landor had a remarkable sympathy for animals, and at his Villa Gherardesca, below Fiesole, he had, besides a population of dogs, cats and birds, a tame marten, a tame leveret and many others.

Byron was both affectionate and fantastic in his menageries. At Cambridge he kept a tame bear "to sit for a fellowship." When Boatswain, his Newfoundland, was in his last paroxysms, Byron wiped away the froth from his mouth with his bare hands; and when he died, Byron had a monument erected at his grave and said he wanted to be buried there. Shelley, visiting him in the Guiccioli Palace at Ravenna, wrote that "he had many servants, ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon. . . . I have just met, on the grand staircase, five peacocks, two guinea hens, and an Egyptian crane." All of these beasts, except the horses, were loose in the house.

When Keats was a boy he caught and made pets of goldfinches, tom-tits, minnows, mice, ticklebacks, dace, cock salmon and other such.

At Amesbury Whittier had a gray and scarlet parrot named Charlie, a great pet both of Whittier and his sister, and famous for wit and wisdom. Charlotte Forten Grimke wrote of him: "He could say many things with great distinctness, and although at first refusing rather spitefully to make my acquaintance, when I invited him to come into the kitchen and get his supper he at once hopped upon my hand and behaved in the most amicable manner. It was very comical to see him dance to a tune of Mr. Whittier's whistling." He used to climb laboriously up the rainspout, "pausing at every step or two to say, in a tone of the deepest self-pity, 'Poor Charlie!' and when he reached the roof screaming impertinently at the passers-by. The Irish children said that he called them 'Paddies,' and threatened . . . vengeance. . . . Charlie's favourite amusement was shaking the unripe pears from the trees in the garden; and when he saw Miss Whittier approaching he would steal away

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with drooping head, like a child caught in a naughty action. This gifted bird afterwards died, and was much missed by the poet, who alluded to him in the poem entitled *The Common Question.*"

Poe at Fordham had a bobolink he had caught and caged, a parrot some one had given him and a cat to which he was especially attached.

At Cambridge Tennyson bought and tamed a snake, kept it in his room and used to sit smoking, "watching its sinuosities upon the carpet."

In 1837 Elizabeth Barrett wrote to Mrs. Martin: "I am happy to announce to you that a new little dove has appeared from a shell over which nobody had prognosticated good. . . . I and the senior dove appear equally delighted, and we all three . . . take a good deal of credit upon ourselves. . . ." About five years after this appeared the famous spaniel Flush. In the course of his long and beloved career he was three times stolen and ransomed—"The joy of meeting between Flush and me would be a good subject for a Greek ode. . . . He dashed upstairs into my room and into my arms, where I hugged him and kissed him. . . ." Flush was extreme in jealousy. He snapped at Browning when he came with an umbrella. He was jealous of Miss Barrett's even looking into the mirror, because of the little brown dog that was in every one. When the baby was born he went into deep melancholy for two weeks and would respond to no attention.

As a boy Browning kept in his father's garden efts, frogs, owls, monkeys, hedgehogs, an eagle and two large snakes; and he used to weep at fairy tales in which any of these animals was hurt. In Italy he loved the little lizards, and had a way of calling them to him. After Mrs. Browning's death and his return to London, he kept in his garden there lizards, toads, an owl and a pair of geese.

I find no record of Whitman's having had a pet until after his stroke, at fifty-six, when he acquired a dog. In the Camden house Whitman and Mrs. Davis had a parrot, a canary, two cats and a dog. In the back parlor there was a clock on the mantel, with cherries painted on the inside of

the glass door. The parrot used to fly to this, open the door with his beak, and peck at the realistic cherries, until today nothing remains of them but their foliage and a faint outline of the fruit.

Rossetti was of the fantastic variety of animal-tamers. In the Cheyne Walk house and garden he had a wombat, a chameleon, a white peacock, white mice, an armadillo, a raccoon, a deer, a kangaroo, a woodchuck, a salamander and a zebu—the last dangerous. On social occasions the wombat used to sleep in an épergne in the middle of the table, indifferent to the talk and light. In moments of intense conversation it would suddenly emerge to eat a few cigars. The white peacock eventually died under the sofa. Rossetti one day invited a friend to come and watch his white mice wake from their hibernation; but they were discovered dead and stinking. He once bought a white bull because its eyes resembled those of a lady he affected. It was tethered in the garden until the neighbors found it dangerous, and it had to be sold. In spite of his zoological mania Rossetti told Morris, in criticism of *Sigurd the Volsung* which the latter had sent him, that he could take no interest in a man whose parent was a snake.

Christina Rossetti had an old maid's devotion to cats and birds, the smaller the better.

Emily Brontë loved wild animals and would have peopled the house with them if her aunt had permitted it. She had a huge dog whom she used to beat occasionally, although told it was dangerous to do so. Her customary attitude in reading was sitting on the hearth with his great head in her lap. Once she fed a mad dog, was bitten in consequence, cauterized the wound herself with a red-hot iron, and told no one of the incident.

When Burroughs was a government clerk in Washington he was homesick for the country; so he bought a cow for company, and pastured it on the common.

Meredith's favorite pet was a "nervous little dachshund." When his daughter-in-law was convalescent from an illness she used to take daily rides in a donkey-cart. Meredith was fond of the donkeys and had an army of them brought to

the house each morning, out of which company he, leaning on the fence, would select the one to be used that day. When he was an old man he himself took daily rides in a donkey-cart.

### *HOBBIES AND AVOCATIONS*

As in most of the qualities and habits of poets, it is impossible to reach any generalization about their collateral interests. It is not surprising to find that a respectable list—including James I, Herbert, Milton, Gray, Collins, Goldsmith, Moore, Browning, Whitman and Emily Brontë—were more or less preoccupied with music; but it is disconcerting to the normal expectation to discover that Burns and Swinburne, two of the most “musical” versifiers in English, had little or no ear for music, and that Swinburne actively detested it. It is perhaps remarkable that, of the poets mentioned in this section, so few of the important ones—only Wotton, Butler, Pope, Gray, Shenstone and Browning—have been interested in the plastic and architectural arts. And, even if the musical list be added to these, it is noticeable that the list of those preferring the sciences is at least as imposing as that of the poets whose preoccupations were æsthetic; the scientific list includes: Rochester, Cowley, Gray, Crabbe, Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, Meredith, De Tabley and Francis Thompson. It is somewhat surprising, in view of the sound generality that poets normally are not materialistically possessive people, to find the collector’s instinct, the desire for things, cropping up in several of the best—Roscommon, Landor, Rogers, Byron, Keats, Browning and Rossetti. With the possible exception of an arguable thesis about poets and science, it seems impossible to identify the poets with any particular class of hobby or avocation.

When a hobby reaches the status of scholarship, it will be mentioned in the next section.

James I of Scotland, while eighteen years the prisoner of Henry IV of England, learned to excel in music.

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Herbert was a musician and sang his own hymns to the lute or viol.

Wotton published *Elements of Architecture*, the best work on the subject to that date.

Milton enjoyed the theatre, and inherited from his father a love of music. While in Italy he gathered a collection of music books. In keeping with the timbre of the epics, he was himself proficient on the organ and the bass viol. Also he had a good voice.

While under the patronage of the Countess of Kent, Butler was intimate with the popular miniature painter Samuel Cooper, and himself dabbled in music and painting. Some of his drawings were shown to Doctor Nash and afterwards were used to stop leaky windows—which treatment Nash said they deserved.

Rochester “made physic part of his study” and “is said to have practiced it successfully.”

“Considering Botany as necessary to a physician,” Cowley, as part of his medical studies, “retired into Kent to gather plants; and as the predominance of a favourite study affects all subordinate operations of the intellect, Botany in the mind of Cowley turned into poetry. He composed in Latin several books on Plants, of which the first and second display the qualities of Herbs, in elegiac verse; the third and fourth the beauties of Flowers in various measures; and the fifth and sixth, the uses of Trees in heroick numbers.”

The landscape gardening of Pope and Shenstone was mentioned earlier.

Gray had a “small, clear” voice, and his singing was much admired in youth. He also played the harpsichord.

Collins played the flute.

Goldsmith was close to a professional wayside musician. Walking “about Ireland with no baggage but a harp,” he earned his lodgings and keep by playing in the village streets, taverns and even great houses. On the continent he did the same thing, substituting the flute for the harp.

After his recovery from his second madness, Cowper, looking for a pleasant occupation, tried drawing, carpentry

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and gardening, and became proficient at the last of these.

From herb-gathering as the village apothecary Crabbe got a habit of minute observation, a specific hobby of botany, and a general interest in nature which remained with him through life.

Burns's teacher said that as a child his ear for music was remarkably dull and his voice untunable. He was fully grown before he could distinguish one tune from another.

Landor patterned his life on the Roman patricians and was vain of his table and his garden. He loved trees and flowers and hated to see them cut down. He was also a picture collector, and took up the Pre-Raphaelites before they were generally recognized. But for this bit of discrimination, he generally showed bad taste in his hobby. Both at Bath and in Florence his rooms were bare of furniture except for pictures that completely covered the walls, mostly bad pictures, or copies of good ones which he claimed to be authentic. It being well known that he demanded admiration for his pictures, he was forever dismayed his guests by presenting them with whatever picture they had thus courteously favored.

When Wordsworth was about thirty he was a serious student of psychology, being interested especially in sub-normal types "as revealing qualities hidden in others by strong will." He was sporadically interested in landscape-gardening and architecture, writing to his friend Sir George Beaumont much valuable advice about the great house he was building and the grounds. But his chief preoccupation was always with nature. In 1820, being in Paris on a Continental tour, he wrote to Lord Lonsdale: "Nothing . . . in this city has interested me at all like the Jardin des Plantes, with the living animals, and the Museum of Natural History which it includes. Scarcely could I refrain from tears of admiration at the sight of this apparently boundless exhibition of the wonders of creation. The statues and pictures of the Louvre affect me feebly in comparison."

Rogers's house in St. James's Place was glutted with "the finest and rarest pictures, busts, books, gems, . . ." Among

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his objects of art were a Titian, a Guido and a Giorgione.

Among the arts, Coleridge preferred music. During his first year at Cambridge he took violin lessons.

Tom Moore was a fine singer and a serious student of music.

Byron was a good actor. As a boy he played two star parts in some amateur theatricals he had prepared, and repeatedly brought down the house. He also liked to sing, and generally had on tap a fund of exotic ballads; the evidence is that his voice was bad. Probably his favorite penchant was for swords, battles and heroes. As a boy he had always beside his bed a "small sword with which he used to amuse himself, when he awoke, by thrusting it through the hangings. The altered condition of these added a high value to the bed when Mrs. Byron sold it on her removal to Newstead Abbey." Byron, after riding over the battlefield of Waterloo on a Cossack horse, "singing a Turkish riding-tune," wrote to a friend: "I shall be glad to hear you have received certain helms and swords, sent from Waterloo, which I rode over with pain and pleasure." "At Morat, in Switzerland, he brought away from the pyramid of bones on the battle-field 'as much as may have made the quarter of a hero.'" He was consistent in his military hobby, which was the expression of his own frustrated impulse to be a man of action, and he went to Greece at last, determined to die on the battlefield.

Shelley's lifelong interest in science, especially chemistry, was aroused by a quack lecturer who visited his first school, Sion House. At Eton he was forbidden to study chemistry, and so performed experiments in his room. One day his tutor, Mr. Bethel, heard strange noises from his room, entered and found Shelley enveloped in blue flames. "What on earth are you doing, Shelley?" asked the teacher. "Please, sir, I am raising the devil." The startled tutor put his hand on some apparatus which, being a leyden jar, gave him a bad shock. Shelley never attempted serious research, but his experiments were all sensational and astonishing, loud with sparks and explosions. Once he bought a big brass cannon at

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Windsor, and harnessed the lower boys to tow it to Eton. He constructed in his tutor's house a miniature steam engine which burst. His rooms at Oxford, stained, burned and stinking from electro-chemical experiments, have been described. When he was twenty he amused himself by sending up fire-balloons over the Bristol Channel, and is discovered doing the same thing four years later, this time on Lake Geneva. At Pisa Shelley and the Gisbornes proposed to build a steamboat, but the plan did not materialize. As a corollary to his explosiveness he had a penchant for target-shooting with a revolver and, especially in his younger days, habitually carried pistols with him on his walks. As a further chemical corollary he acquired, when he was nineteen, a "hot interest in anatomy" and, his cousin Charles Grove being a medical student, declared his intention of likewise entering the medical profession. He attended lectures with his cousin and, though he never practiced, he made good use of the knowledge then acquired in ministering to the peasants at Great Marlow five years later. There is some evidence that Shelley acted in Shakespearian parts with a company near Windsor in 1815, when he was twenty-three; but generally he was prejudiced against theatres, though himself endowed with great mimetic ability. But the greatest and most mysterious of all Shelley's preoccupations was with water, boats and swimming. He was apparently fascinated by water as a great element, and time and again prophesied his death by drowning. But it was typical of Shelley's humorless absolutism where his fancy was involved that he was without fear in the business, and never troubled to learn either to navigate or to swim. Water was to him the bearer of the Great Secret, and if he lost his life in coming at it, what did that matter? He always preferred to travel by water, especially on rivers, which were not "the works of the hands of men." The absurd side of his aquatic penchant was his lifelong habit of making and sailing paper boats. As a reformer of twenty he used to send out hundreds of these toys, as well as corked bottles, on the Bristol Channel, both types of carriers containing glad messages of revolution for the world. Once in Hyde Park he was exercising his miniature

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trade when, running out of paper enough to make a needful sail, he used a five-pound note for the purpose. When living at Great Marlow he spent a large part of each day in this practice, or in himself rowing on the Thames. In 1816 the friendship that sprung up with Byron at Geneva was based partly on mutual literary admiration, and partly on their common love of boating. Byron knew something of sailing and navigation, and they took a trip together around the lake in an open boat. They nearly foundered in a sudden storm one night. After Byron had got the sail down, and while the water poured in and the wind roared in the darkness, they sat in furious argument, Byron, proud of his power as a swimmer, declaring that he would save Shelley when they sank, Shelley equally determined that he would not be saved. Although unable to swim, Shelley was forever invading pools and streams. In 1818, when he and Mary were living at the Baths of Lucca, he found a waterfall and a pool by which he habitually sat naked reading Herodotus, leaping up occasionally to dash into the pool. One day when Trelawney, a powerful swimmer, jumped into a deep pool in the Arno, Shelley immediately jumped in after him and lay "like a conger eel" on the bottom till Trelawney fished him up with some difficulty, Shelley protesting as soon as he could breathe that truth lay always "at the bottom of the well" and that "in another minute I should have found it." One day he and Williams and two others, being on the Pisa Canal in their flat-bottomed boat, tipped over. Shelley was dragged to shore protesting. But when they got him on land he fainted. Not long after this, when Shelley was undoubtedly carrying on an affair with Jane Williams, he got his obsession of death by water mixed up with his search for the absolute in terms of women. He took Jane rowing far out to sea. Suddenly he went into a trance, then leapt forward and cried, "Now let us solve the great mystery together." Jane, who was a brilliant woman and one of the most congenial of his "sisters," had to exercise the greatest tact to keep him from upsetting the boat, and he did upset it after they were in shallow water.

Keats was versatile in his interests, social and æsthetic. He

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probably did not dance, for he was always annoyed at Fanny Brawne's going to dances without him. He was addicted to twenty-one and other card games. Once he records having won 10/6, again of having lost ten pounds. In 1819 he wrote to Fanny from the Isle of Wight, "We have had four in our small room playing cards night and morning leaving me no undisturbed opportunity to write." As a boy he liked to go to prize-fights, and at least once he went to a bear-baiting, for he afterwards described it to Clarke with zest. Among the arts other than poetry, Keats preferred the theatre—he worked for a while as a dramatic critic—, painting and sculpture, but cared little for music. He haunted picture-galleries, though having no technical knowledge of painting. He made a lifelong hobby of seals and kindred objects—especially "Tassie's gems," imitation cameos and intaglios—and once planned to make a collection of them. In his letters he used, according to Amy Lowell, seals of at least "five different designs; there is a head of Shakespeare, two large heads of worthy gentlemen I cannot identify, a small square containing the torso of a boy, and a beautiful little lyre with two of its strings broken and the rather wistful motto: '*Qui me néglige me désole.*'"

Elizabeth Barrett dabbled in crystal-gazing and was intensely preoccupied with mesmerism—then the *dernier cri*—not as an aspect of psychology, but as "a door opening into the unseen world." As she grew older she went definitely spiritualistic, to her husband's disapproval.

Of all of Emerson's collateral interests, that in his pears was the most consistent. Once when he sent some specimens to the Cattle Show, a committee from the Horticultural Society visited him, curious about the soil that could produce such poor examples of such fine varieties. He also liked horses, went to all the Boston horse-shows and enjoyed the company of drivers and stablemen. Emerson had painted as a boy and seldom missed a picture show, but he liked sculpture better. For music he had his flute, the æolian harp in his study window, and the "ice-harp" of Walden Pond in winter, where he would stand for half an hour at a time

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skipping stones over the "crystal drum." By way of intellectual avocation, he edited *The Dial* for a time when he was thirty-eight, and planned a university at Concord which bore fruit as the Concord School of Philosophy forty years later. In his last active years his curiosity ranged over archæology, mythology, zoölogy and astronomy. With Agassiz he studied marine life at Nahant. At Williamsburg he looked through the telescope and noted the four stars in Lyra and the two hundred in the Pleiades.

Holmes had a complete carpenter shop in the basement of his house and could make a tolerably good chair.

Poe was a specialist in cryptographs and made himself a reputation for solving them.

Tennyson had no ear for music and played a little on the flute, liking "complicated music as suggesting echoes of wind and waves." He always romanticized heroes, chivalry and war, and got a great kick out of going over the Waterloo battlefield minutely. He enjoyed cock-fights and prize-fights and played the government lottery. At eighty he took singing and painting lessons. Tennyson's important pre-occupation was with science. Although ignorant of Darwin's secret researches, he "noted the fact" of natural selection in *In Memoriam* several years before Darwin "supplied the evidence." When he was eighty-two, visiting the Kensington Museum, "he insisted on walking through the geological part and seeing again his old friends, the Ichthyosaurus, the Plesiosaurus and the Giant Sloth."

Fitzgerald collected pictures. For many years he spent most of the summer coasting up and down the English Channel in his little sailing yacht which he called *The Scandal*, "because nothing went faster in these parts."

Browning as a youth studied boxing, fencing, riding and the piano and became, with his robust health and many talents, a sort of a renaissance character. In Italy he had a good piano in his rooms, and was always invading empty Italian churches in order to improvise on the organ. He drew, for relaxation, and in his fiftieth year studied with his friend the sculptor Story, spending six hours a day copying busts and

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learning to model excellently. He also collected antique furniture, for which he never had a proper place until two years before his death, when he took a big palazzo.

Huneker said that Whitman told him that his favorite recreation was music "of which art he knew nothing." "When he had learned to moderate his glass" he enjoyed going to saloons to hear the native singers of "the simple melodies of the heart." He enjoyed Italian opera, and despised consciousness of technique in music. At one time he acted in amateur theatricals and always loved the theatre, especially the old Bowery Theatre with its audience of two thousand "full-sinewed" men. He took phrenology seriously, and was much pleased when Fowler read on his head "caution, intuition, firmness, self-esteem, benevolence, destructiveness, . . . love of good living, . . . amativeness, and adhesiveness." He frequented fairs and expositions, loitering, watching the crowds and the exhibits. In 1853 at the Crystal Palace Fair, the police exercised special surveillance over this shabbily dressed man who would stand for hours before Thorwaldsen's marbles—presently he made friends with the policemen.

After his wife's death Rossetti became a collector, and inaugurated the modern taste for antique furniture, china and bric-a-brac. For lack of space he crammed his curiosities together in the corners of his big house.

As a girl Emily Dickinson had a genius for coming on unusual flowers in the woods. Later she filled her conservatory with rare things—cape jasmine, a rare scarlet lily—and had no common things except ferns, oxalis and heliotrope. As a girl she played the piano but gave it up later.

Riley as a boy wanted to be a violinist, but "the wind, stark staring mad," slammed a door on his thumb and closed that ambition. He had, however, considerable musical versatility, and, never learning notes, could play entertainingly by ear on the banjo, bass viol, piano and organ. He also sang.

Stevenson loved not only voyages and the South Seas but ships for their own sakes. He said he would trade his fame for a good seventy-ton schooner and the money to keep her.

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"So it was the fulfilling of two life-time dreams, when he chartered the ninety-five-foot, seventy-ton schooner *Casco*, and set sail for a three years' cruise among the South Sea islands. . . ." His recreation was playing the flute.

Francis Thompson, though himself shy, loved adventure stories as a boy and wrote them at school; at thirty-eight he was still interested in battles, strategy and great generals. About the time he left Ushaw College, at nineteen, he acquired an enthusiasm for cricket which, besides stimulating his own awkward exercises, took him to all the great matches, the details and players of which filled his talk for the rest of his life. In his successful days he still wrote poems and reviewed books on cricket. Toward music he was naïve and his responses unpredictable. Sometimes he was oblivious to the best music, sometimes moved suddenly and powerfully, when he would stand behind the pianist, his body "waving . . . in . . . pleasure." He could not play, but would sit at the piano, striking sequences of chords with great earnestness.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

*For the several cases where a hobby has coincided with scholarship, see the next section.*

Page 203, Milton. See daily music, *Domestic Habits, Crotchets and Accidents*, p. 181.

Page 203, Pope. See landscape-gardening in *Home and Travel*, p. 162.

Page 203, Shenstone. See landscape-gardening in *Home and Travel*, p. 162.

Pages 203-4, Cowper. See his garden-parlor, *Home and Travel*, p. 163.

Page 204, Landor. "Good God, I forgot the violets"—see *In Action*, p. 397.

Pages 205-7, Shelley. See the chemistry of his Oxford rooms, *Home and Travel*, pp. 169-70.

Swinburne (not mentioned in this section). See his preoccupation with exotic furniture, *Home and Travel*, pp. 178-9.

## LEARNING

Akin to the subjects of "Hobbies and Avocations," discussed in the previous section, are learning and scholarship. From this point of view the poets may be divided into three groups. First, scholars; Second, those of remarkably wide learning; Third, those of relatively little learning. Here, as in most other topics, it is noticeable that no general statement can be made of the peculiar qualifications of the poet. On the side of scholarship we have, among others, Milton, Gray, Coleridge, Landor and Tennyson; on the side of wide general learning, Dryden, Scott, Shelley, Byron, Browning and Francis Thompson; and on the side of relative ignorance, Pope, Burns, Wordsworth, Keats and Whitman.

## I.—Poets who were scholars:

Chapman (Classics); Donne (Spanish, Italian, Law, Theology); Milton (Classics, Hebrew—both biblical and rabbinical—Syriac; also Italian, French, Music); Marvell (Milton said he was a "scholar, and well read in Greek and Latin authors"—also had a conversational and reading knowledge of French, Dutch, Spanish and Italian); Cowley (Classics, Medicine, Botany—also was "master of . . . all the languages of Europe"); Crashaw (Latin and Italian); Rochester (reputation of being the greatest scholar in the nobility, especially in Classics and Medicine); Edmund Smith; Walsh; Gray ("the most learned man in Europe"—Classics, Sculpture, Painting, Music, Architecture, Antiquities, Botany, Zoölogy, being a universally recognized scholar in each of these subjects); Sir William Jones ("Master of twenty-eight languages," his chief eminence being as an oriental scholar and judge, "an enlightened lawyer and patriot"); Hopkinson (Fine Arts); Coleridge (Philosophy, Theology, Metaphysics—also a unique mass of curious learning); Landor (Classics); Percival (Medicine, Chemistry, Philology, Topography, Geology—besides the classics, mastered Basque, Sanscrit, Russian and the Scandinavian tongues); Elizabeth Barrett (Greek); Emerson (Theology); Longfellow (French, Spanish, Italian, Ger-

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man, Swedish, Danish, Finnish); Holmes (Medicine); Tennyson (Botany and Astronomy); Rossetti (an authority on all European poetry); Swinburne (Gosse said he was more deeply versed in the classics than any English poet, not excepting Milton and Landor—in his prodigious general learning had a flair for discovering obscure authors and for turning at once to the best work of all authors).

II.—Poets of unusual learning, but not scholarship in any line:

Chaucer; James I of Scotland; Sidney; Shakespeare (presumably picked up wide learning in the eight unrecorded years—had a vocabulary of 15,000 words as distinguished from Milton's 8000); P. Fletcher (amateur in anatomy); Herbert (Classics, Theology and Music); Dryden; Swift; Addison; William King (at twenty-six claimed to have read 22,000 books and manuscripts, almost all of them during eight years at Oxford—Johnson points out that this is an average of seven a day); Blair (Botany); Collins (read easily the Classics, Hebrew, Italian, French and Spanish—after his literary failure eschewed all books but the *New Testament*); Crabbe (Botany and Natural History generally); Bowles; Scott (great reader of romances and ballads but no scholar); Southey (Botany and Entomology); Byron (remarkably wide miscellaneous reader); Shelley (Classics, Philosophy, Alchemy, Chemistry—but interest human, social, literary, spectacular—never academic—was a busy amateur in chemistry, but only because he liked flashes and explosions—never attempted research); Browning (although an amateur in most of the arts his interest in them was not academic, and his wide reading was miscellaneous); Lowell; Meredith (intimate amateur knowledge of Ornithology and Botany); Gordon (after his wild youth became a wide reader and picked up a good knowledge of Latin, Greek and French literature); Francis Thompson (had a good field knowledge of Botany picked up by actual observation—had wide general reading but lacked the power of concentration to pursue any subject thoroughly).

III.—Poets of relatively little learning:

Cædmon (so unlettered that he could not learn to recite

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poetically and had to quit the monks' hall in shame when the harp went round); "Blind Harry"—fifteenth-century Scotch poet; Butler; Blackmore (little learning except in his profession, Medicine); Pope (read the classics with a "trot"—never mastered French—was a consistent reader only of the popular thing of the moment, and had a facility for settling profound matters with a glib superficiality); Savage; Shenstone (landscape-gardening); Blacklock; Goldsmith; Cowper; Wordsworth (at Cambridge regretted the lack of some compelling force to "break the light composure of his easy spirits and bind him to a task demanding all his effort."—"I know little Latin, and scarce anything of Greek."—When in Germany, ostensibly to study the language, he learned nothing of it.—Throughout life he read only as a duty, never for pleasure); Keats (no Greek, and little Classical background of any kind—once made a list of classical names, with the pronunciation indicated—was a thorough reader of poetry, especially Shakespeare—also picked up a fair historical background, and some knowledge of Alchemy); Tom Moore (serious student of Music); Poe; Whitman (much disorganized reading, especially of old magazines and cheap books—attended lectures on Greek and Roman civilization); Emily Brontë; Emily Dickinson (in mature life read mostly in newspapers).

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It will be noticeable that in initial composition the poets have divided into two classes, without a sufficient preponderance on either side to justify a general conclusion: there have been many—including Gray, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Whitman and Poe—who wrote as any layman might, setting down their lines as they came to them; and again there have been some—including Milton, Wordsworth and Swinburne—who composed whole poems or long passages in their heads before setting anything on

paper. Also, in the old controversy of Inspiration versus Art, there is plenty of evidence on both sides: Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Browning and Swinburne tended pretty much to leave their things as their respective genii dictated them; while Milton, Gray, Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson toiled over theirs, condensing and polishing.

Cædmon, as already mentioned, was so unlettered that he had to retire for shame from the Refectory at Whitby Abbey when the harp, passing from hand to hand during dinner, approached him with its implication that he must recite. "On one of these occasions," as narrated by Bede, "it happened to be Cædmon's turn to keep guard at the stable during the night, and, overcome with vexation, he quitted the table and retired to his post of duty, where, laying himself down, he fell into a sound slumber. In the midst of his sleep, a stranger appeared to him, and, saluting him by his name, said: 'Cædmon, sing me something.' Cædmon answered: 'I know nothing to sing; for my incapacity in this respect was the cause of my leaving the hall to come hither.' 'Nay,' said the stranger, 'but thou hast something to sing.' 'What must I sing?' said Cædmon. 'Sing the *Creation*,' was the reply; and thereupon Cædmon began to sing verses 'which he had never heard before,' and which are said to have been as follows: [Here, in Bede's account, follow a few lines of the opening of the poem *Creation*.] Cædmon then awoke, and he was not only able to repeat the lines which he had made in his sleep, but he continued them in a strain of admirable versification. In the morning, he hastened to the town-reeve, or bailiff, of Whitby, who carried him before the Abbess Hilda; and there, in the presence of some of the learned men of the place, he told his story, and they were all of opinion that he had received the gift of song from Heaven."

While hunting, Sidney carried with him a "table book" which he often took out to make jottings. He dashed off the *Arcadia* rapidly to please his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, much of it being written in her presence.

Raleigh wrote his *History* and much of his verse during his twelve years' imprisonment, and probably composed the

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lyric, "Even such is time . . .," in his cell over the Tower gate the night before his execution.

During his opulence Ben Jonson worked in his library in his house on the Thames, and when the library was burned his notes and manuscripts were lost.

Beaumont and Fletcher actually composed together.

Milton wrote the *Ode on Christ's Nativity* at Cambridge, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* as exercises when he was twenty-four, *Lycidas* at twenty-nine, at the end of his five years' retirement. In 1641, when he was thirty-three, he listed nearly a hundred possible subjects for the great work he felt destined to write, of which that of *Paradise Lost* seemed to intrigue him most, having the longest outline. A year later he settled both on this subject and on the rhythm, and wrote a few lines which survived; but the form at that time was to have been that of a play. Sixteen years later, when he was fifty, blind and retired from government service, he began continuous work, finished the composition in five years, and saw to the final copying and correction during two years more. Milton found bed "favorable to composition," "with its warmth and recumbent posture." Often he lay awake all night trying to perfect a single line. But usually he would compose about forty lines which he would retain and dictate rapidly the next day, "sitting obliquely in an elbow chair, with his leg thrown over the arm," in his "small chamber hung with rusty green; and having thus recorded them would then and there reduce them by about half. He often composed or corrected while walking in the garden, then would come in and dictate. He sometimes used one of his daughters for amanuensis—especially Deborah, the only one who showed any tenderness for him, but generally required their services only for reading to him, and employed some young man to take his dictation. Milton could compose only "from the Autumnal Equinox to the Vernal," and, "though he courted his fancy never so much," what he wrote in the summer never pleased him. Thus, though he spent five years on *Paradise Lost*, he actually devoted to it but half that time. It was finished in 1665, the year of the Great Plague, when Ellwood, one of Milton's

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amanuenses, found him a retreat in a cottage in Bucks. When he showed the complete manuscript to Ellwood, the latter inquired, "What of *Paradise Found?*?" and Milton immediately began work on *Paradise Regained*. This and *Samson Agonistes* were written mostly in this and the following year, 1665 and 1666, the years respectively of the Great Plague and the Great Fire. Although Milton lost his house in the Fire, he was so indifferent to both of these external catastrophes that no trace of either appears in the poems, and it was "in the midst of the ruins of London" that he offered *Paradise Lost* to the royal Licenser.

Except for college exercises and complimentary verses Marvell published none of his verse over his own name during his lifetime. His garden poems—*Lines in a Garden*, *To His Coy Mistress*, etc.—were written between the ages of twenty-nine and thirty-three while he was a tutor to Nancy, Lord Fairfax's twelve-year-old daughter, at Fairfax's Nunappleton, famous for its gardens. They were not published in any form until their appearance in his first volume, published in 1681, three years after his death. The great *Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland* lay in manuscript, unknown to any one, for over a century, till 1776, when it was discovered, in a copy book, in Marvell's handwriting, and published.

Dorset served in the Dutch naval war of 1665 and on the night before the great battle composed the song, *To All You Ladies Now at Land*.

Wither wrote some of his best verse in prison.

During his sea expedition to relieve Tangier from the Moors, with 2000 men under his command, Sheffield wrote his popular and licentious poem, *The Vision*.

Dryden, when about to compose, had himself "blooded and purged." He was a fast and prolific writer, composing, besides his miscellaneous verse and prose and translations, twenty-eight plays. He contracted to do four plays a year, and once wrote six.

Addison composed quickly, but was slow and scrupulous in revision. "He would alter," according to Pope, "anything to please his friends, before publication; but would not

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retouch his pieces afterwards; and I believe not one word in *Cato*, to which I made an objection, was suffered to stand." His habit of composition was to make privately his plan for what he designed to write, then dictate it rapidly and easily.

Only great ambition and great courage empowered Pope to accomplish his large output. His continuous headaches and general ill health made consistent mental effort impossible, and he thought by "shocks and electric flashes." He turned every thought and moment to account, scribbling couplets on backs of letters or odd bits of paper while in a bus or at a formal dinner, a habit which made Swift call him "paper-sparing Pope." He wrote most of the *Iliad* on the backs of letters, and part of the Third Book of the *Odyssey* on the back of a letter of Young's signed "E. Young." Once, during the "dreadful winter of forty," Pope's old servant was called from bed four times in one night to supply him with paper.

Though in conversation or a drinking bout, Edmund Smith was always jotting thoughts and images. But he completed little.

Savage composed his tragedy of *Sir Thomas Overbury* under the greatest difficulties. "During a considerable part of the time in which he was employed upon this performance, he was without lodging, and often without meat; nor had he any other conveniences for study than the fields or the street allowed him; there he used to walk and form his speeches, and afterwards step in a shop, beg for a few moments the use of the pen and ink, and write down what he had composed, upon paper which he had picked up by accident."

Young early showed a touch of the gloomy and the macabre. Once while he was writing a tragedy the Duke of Grafton sent him for a lamp a human skull with a candle in it, which lamp Young used in composition for some time thereafter. In *The True Estimate of Human Life* Young reveals only the gloomy side of his point of view, the only manuscript of the other side having been torn up by a lady's monkey. The occasion of the *Night Thoughts* was the suc-

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cessive deaths of his wife, his step-daughter, and the latter's husband, to all of whom he was closely attached.

Gray was always much cast down over his subservience to "our sovereign lady and mistress, . . . Laziness," produced but little, and was indifferent to publication, though he was very meticulous in correction. Generally it was the loss of his friends that stirred him to creative effort. The death of his uncle and of West motivated the *Elegy*, which he began at Stoke-Pogis in 1742, at the age of twenty-six, but no remnant of the original form remains. He resumed work on it in 1749, and finished it at Cambridge in 1750. He sent it to Walpole who was so indiscreet in distributing it in manuscript that a copy fell into the hands of the editor of the piratical *Magazine of Magazines*. The latter wrote to Gray that he was going to print it. Gray wrote Walpole hysterically, and Walpole got Dodsley, the publisher, to push through and issue an edition—anonymous—in five days. Gray wrote a small, neat hand, using a crow quill.

Smart, being in a madhouse and denied writing materials, wrote much of his verse, probably including the *Song of David*, with a key on the walls of his cell.

Young William Pattison used to compose in a sylvan place which, resembling a description of Cowley's, he called "Cowley's Walk," a place, incidentally, which could hardly have existed outside the sentimentalities of the last half of the eighteenth century. Disraeli gives the following description of it, composed by a friend of the poet: "On one side of 'Cowley's Walk' is a huge rock, grown over with moss and ivy climbing on its sides, and in some parts small trees spring out of the crevices of the rock; at the bottom is a wild plantation of irregular trees, in every part looking aged and venerable. Among these cavities, one larger than the rest was the cave he loved to sit in: arched like a canopy, its rustic borders were edged with ivy hanging down, overshadowing the place, and hence he called it (for poets must give a name to every object they love) 'Hederinda,' bearing ivy. At the foot of this grotto a stream of water ran along the walk. . . . Here, in the heat of the day, he shared with friends his rapture and his solitude; and

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here, through summer nights, in the light of the moon, he meditated, and melodised his verses by the gentle fall of waters."

While the boy Gifford was apprenticed to a shoemaker he was too poor to get paper and pen, and had no book but an algebra. He devised a unique method of pursuing his education, although it is not recorded that he used it in composing his poetry: "I beat out pieces of leather as smooth as possible, and wrought my problems on them with a blunted awl."

Bloomfield wrote the *Farmer's Boy* in his shoemaker's garret.

Like Pattison, Leyden selected a remarkable place for his studies, experiments and composition: ". . . His chief place of retirement," says Scott, "was the small parish church, a gloomy and ancient building, generally believed in the neighborhood to be haunted. To this chosen place of study, usually locked during week-days, Leyden made entrance by means of a window, read there for many hours of the day, and deposited his books and specimens in a retired pew. It was a well-chosen spot of seclusion, for the kirk—excepting during divine service—is rather a place of terror to the Scottish rustic, and that of Cavers was rendered more so by many a tale of ghosts and witchcraft, . . . to which Leyden, to indulge his humour and to secure his retirement, contrived to make some additions. The nature of his abstruse studies" and "some specimens of natural history, as toads and adders, left exposed" in the church "in their spirit-phials, . . . rendered his gloomy haunt . . . venerated by the wise . . ." and "feared by the simple of the parish."

James Grahame took a copy of *The Sabbath*, composed without his wife's knowledge and published without his name, home and threw it on the table, walking up and down while his wife looked at it. "Ah, James," she exclaimed, "if you could but produce a poem like this!"

Young Burns never or rarely composed with paper before him. A detached stanza would occur to him while he was "out and about" and would float in his mind until he returned home and scrawled it on a slate. Other stanzas and

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corrections would likewise occur to him when he was in the fields or at market. In his maturity he pursued this fragmentary method of composition in a more systematic way. "I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other, as it suited the momentary tone of my mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they found vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet." At the publishers Burns would fidget "back and forth to the printer, correcting his copy by fits and starts as he strode up and down the print-shop slapping his leg with a riding whip, using, when he sat, one particular stool which came to be known as Burns's stool. Once Sir John Dalrymple, who was having printed his 'Essay on the Properties of Coal Tar,' took the Burns stool," ignorant of the tradition. Burns "came in and stood glaring. 'What does that fellow want?' asked Dalrymple, and was duly enlightened. 'I'll give up the stool for no one,' said Dalrymple. 'But it is Robert Burns the poet,' said the printer, and Sir John leapt up, exclaiming, 'Give him all the stools in the house.' "

Blake is supposed to have been an "inspired," even an automatic writer; but Mr. Damon insists that he was only subject to the divine-inspiration jargon of his period, and in addition enjoyed mystifying the curious. "I write," he told the credulous Robinson, "when commanded by the spirits, and the moment I have written I see the words fly about the room in all directions. It is then published, and the spirits can read. My manuscripts are of no further use. I have been tempted to burn my manuscripts, but my wife won't let me." Robinson hastened nervously to assure him that his wife was right, and Blake solemnly promised that he would not destroy them. Blake claimed that he wrote *Milton* "from immediate dictation twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without premeditation, and even against my will. An immense poem exists which seems to be the labour of a long life, all produced without labour or study." Blake habitually wrote for hours at night, Mrs. Blake assisting. "She would get up . . . , when he was

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under his very fierce inspirations, which were as if they would tear him asunder, while he was yielding himself to the Muse, or whatever else it could be called, sketching and writing. And so terrible a task did this seem to be, that she had to sit motionless and silent; only to stay him mentally, without moving hand or foot; this for hours, night after night." But in spite of this divine authority for his words, Damon insists that Blake was careful in revision, and was quite conscious of all the tricks of his trade. In the case of *America* he discarded his first draft after four plates had been actually engraved.

Crabbe had little self-criticism. While living at Burke's house he wrote *The Library* and *The Village* under his patron's close supervision, often actually composing in his presence. During his twenty-two silent years he burned most of his compositions. Among these were three novels: when his wife, then deranged, said they were inferior to his verse, he "cremated them without a murmur." Crabbe was prolific, and left twenty-one manuscript volumes at his death.

Cowper wrote most of his best things in his "greenhouse," a recess in the Olney house with many windows.

Mickle, being a printer, often composed his verses directly into type without taking the trouble previously to put them into writing.

Wordsworth habitually composed "while walking in the open air, and he retained hundreds of lines in his mind, often for many weeks, before they were completed." He had a "curious natural affection which made the physical act of writing difficult for him"; also he wrote an almost illegible hand. As a result of these limitations he wrote almost no letters except business ones, and dictated most of his compositions also, at first to Dorothy, and later to his wife and Sara Hutchinson as well. Dorothy always copied the few short poems he himself transcribed, and he often required her to record episodes for possible use in later poems—hence, both Wordsworth's and Coleridge's habit of perusing Dorothy's *Journals* and stealing images from them, often verbatim. Thus, between taking dictation, copying poems and revising poems, and recording episodes, Wordsworth often

had all three of his women working at once, and after he went partially blind his daughter Dora joined the little band of secretarial slaves. Lamb wrote to Wordsworth in 1816: "Your manual graphy is terrible. . . . I should not wonder if the constant making out of such paragraphs is the cause of that weakness of Mrs. Wordsworth's eyes. . . . Dorothy, I hear, has mounted spectacles; so you have deoculated two of your dearest relatives." Wordsworth's first volume, *Descriptive Sketches*, was composed while walking on the banks of the Loire. He composed the *Tintern Abbey* poem while on a walking trip with Dorothy, being penniless and having just been expelled from Alfoxden for being a liberal—"I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down until I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after," in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth "wrote" *The Glow-worm* on horseback, and the *Westminster Bridge* sonnet immediately after crossing the Bridge at dawn in a coach bound for Dover. Dorothy thus describes him composing *The Prelude*: "He takes out an umbrella, and I dare say stands stock still under it, during many a rainy half-hour, in the middle of the road or field." Having completed *The Prelude* in 1805, he tinkered with it the rest of his life, deleting the liberal views, from which he was apostate. Not content with infinite correcting at home, Wordsworth often dragged Dorothy with him to the Ambleside—near Grasmere—Post Office in order to make some final change in a manuscript or in proof sheets. Mrs. Nicholson, wife of the postmaster, told their habits to Mrs. Davy, who recorded her account: "At that time the mail used to pass through at one in the morning, so my husband and me used to go early to bed; but when Mr. and Miss Wordsworth came, let it be as late as it would, my husband would get up and let them in and give them their letter out of the box, and then they would sit up in our parlour or in the kitchen, discussing over it and reading and changing till they had made it quite to their minds, and then they would

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seal up the packet again, and knock at our bedroom door, and say, 'Now Mr. Nicholson, please will you bolt the door after us? Here is our letter for the post.' And, oh, they were always so friendly to us and so loving to one another." Wordsworth, composing, dictating or correcting, always worked to the limit of his strength and often sent himself to bed sick. Dorothy reported: "He writes with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain." Again: "William composed without much success at the sheepfold." Again: "William worked at 'The Ruined Cottage' and made himself very ill." Again: "William wished to break off composition, but was unable, and so did himself harm." Again: "William all the morning engaged in wearisome composition." Again: "William tired himself seeking an epithet for the cuckoo."

The characteristics of Coleridge's composition were its "involuntary and almost automatic quality," and his utter indolence. His genius was like a stream, "a moving mirror that mixed and recombined the images which it passively reflected," images stored in his memory from reading rather than from observation. When he was twenty-three he and Southey contracted to supply Cottle, a Bristol publisher, with the manuscript for a book, receiving £30 and £20 respectively. Coleridge's contributions were already composed and only needed transcribing, but he maddened Cottle with inexcusable delays, pleading little "finger industry," "brain-craziness," illness, complaining that the very act of writing things down made them so painfully material. In a year he completed the work that needed have taken only a few hours. The following year he and Wordsworth went on a walking trip, the two poets intending to compose together a poem to defray expenses. A friend had recently told Coleridge of a dream in which a skeleton ship and a ghost navigator figured, which he was able to elaborate from his own vast reading of curious voyages. Wordsworth supplied the moral idea of the albatross and the revenge of the tutelary spirits, but he contributed only a line or two to the finished *Ancient Mariner*. The bulk of it Coleridge composed while walking, reciting it *ex tempore* as it came to

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him. Coleridge himself was "one of three," the other two being Dorothy and William. In much of his work Coleridge helped himself as freely as did Wordsworth to the imagery in Dorothy's *Journals*. She helped him actively with the first part of *Christabel*, while he was living with the Wordsworths in 1798, she supplying the imagery, he the mystery. Shortly after this, with domestic worries descending on him, Coleridge retired to a "lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton," hoping to compose his feelings by a change of scene. After taking a dose of opium he fell asleep in his chair while reading—from *Purchas' Pilgrimage*: "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan build a stately palace, encompassing sixteen miles of plain ground with a wall"—etc., most of the imagery of the poem. After three hours he awoke, convinced that in his sleep he had composed 200–300 lines, and started immediately to transcribe them; but was soon interrupted by "a person on business from Porlock," who kept him an hour, after which the rest of the poem had vanished, but for a few phrases. By thirty, harassed by uncertainties and family troubles, Coleridge's free-flowing fancy—that is, his poetic genius—had vanished forever.

Southern is supposed to have been the most voluminous writer of the romantic period. Between twenty and thirty he burned more than all he ever published.

Scott's industry was prodigious, and he considered thirty printed pages a day's work, even while he was acting as host to most of England and Scotland.

Landor was never compelled emotionally to any kind of poetry. He decided what was a good idea for a poem, and wrote it. Generally he wrote at night or in some solitary spot out-of-doors. But while composing his tragedy *Count Julian*, "in the daytime I laboured, and at night unburdened my mind, shedding many tears." Landor wrote a large hand.

Barlow, as minister to France, had to follow "the seat of government"—that is, Napoleon—through the Moscow campaign. Somewhere in Poland he dictated to his secretary his *Advice to a Raven in Russia*, "only a night or two before the van of the French army . . . entered Vilna on their retreat."

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Tom Moore apparently was not sea-sick, for he wrote most of two volumes of verse while voyaging to and from Bermuda on a sailing ship.

One dark December evening when Bryant was twenty-two and uncertain about his future, he was driving alone to Plainfield when the chilly dusk was suddenly dissipated by the setting sun breaking brilliantly below a cloud and flooding the landscape with eerie light. A solitary bird flew across the sun and vanished. Bryant proceeded to the house where he was to pass the night, and there wrote *To a Waterfowl*.

Byron, eighteen years old and en route with John Pigot to the production of a play they had written, extemporized a prologue then and there which they used in the play. In his mature years Byron habitually lay abed most of the day and wrote at night, with the assistance of gin and water, being one of the few poets who have used alcohol while composing. Having finished a piece of work he constantly "fed the printers," taking it out and correcting it, and supplying new copy up to the last minute. He worked a year on *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, yet added a hundred lines after it was in the hands of the publisher. But he never would look at proof. His lines to the memory of his favorite dog, Boatswain, inscribed on the latter's tombstone, were written three weeks before the dog died.

Shelley wrote the first act of *Prometheus Unbound* in Venice, in the late autumn of 1818, and the second and third acts the following February, sitting among the enormous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, in Rome. In the summer of 1819, living at Monte Nero, near Leghorn, he found himself a study in a romantic tower with a prospect both of the Appenines and the sea. Here he wrote *The Cenci*. Continuing through this *annus mirabilis*, the family settled at Florence in the autumn, to await the birth of Percy Florence Shelley, and one November day, while walking in the Cascione Forest, Shelley was overtaken by a spectacular storm, with driving wind, thunder, lightning and hail. He went home and wrote the *Ode to the West Wind*. In 1820 they settled at Pisa, where he wrote *The Sensitive Plant*, the *Ode to Liberty, Vision of the Sea* and *The Cloud*. Here he had

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a study in his own house where he could find peace; but he also continued his habit of wandering in the woods, jotting lines on scraps of paper, and throwing most of them away. Presently they moved to Leghorn, their last home, where he composed *To a Skylark* and *The Witch of Atlas*, the latter in three days. Shelley wrote a beautiful, small, clear hand, and was an atrocious speller.

Keats, while a medical student at St. Thomas's and St. Guy's Hospital, would sit in the class and—according to his room-mate, Henry Stephens—"would scribble doggerel rhymes among the notes of Lecture, particularly if he got hold of another student's syllabus." Here is a fragment indited on the cover of Stephens's book:

Give me woman, wine and snuff  
Until I cry out, "hold! enough."  
You may do so sans objection  
Until the day of resurrection.

One day in December following his graduation from medical school, Keats and his friend Clarke went out to Hampstead to see Hunt, who "proposed to Keats the challenge of writing then, there, and to time, a sonnet 'On the Grasshopper and Cricket,'" this competitive impromptu sonneteering being a favorite pastime of Hunt. "No one was present but myself," writes Clarke, "and they accordingly set to. . . . The time . . . was short for such a performance, and Keats won as to time." Hunt greeted his younger friend's poem with "unaffected generosity and perfectly unpretentious encouragement"—"Ah! That's perfect! Bravo, Keats!" In spite of this performance Keats generally figures among the meticulous revisers. But he wrote *Endymion* too fast—4000 lines composed and corrected in seven months, while shifting his residence continuously, to the Isle of Wight, to Margate, to Canterbury, to London, to Oxford, back to Hampstead, and to Burford Bridge, where it was finished. During the period he recorded, "I read and write about eight hours a day"—not an excessive working day, especially as it included reading, and, subtracting the time wasted in his many changes of *situs*, remarkably little was

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actually devoted to this formidable composition. The experience of *Endymion* taught Keats that while he was composing, companionship must always be available to him. His best spurt in *Endymion*—the third book, 1043 lines in three weeks, occurred while luxuriating as the guest of his friend Bailey at Oxford. The latter records Keats's manner of composition: "He wrote, and I read, sometimes at the same table, sometimes at separate desks or tables, from breakfast" until "two or three o'clock. He sat down to his task,—which was about 50 lines a day,—with his paper before him, and wrote with as much regularity, and apparently as much ease as he wrote letters. . . . Sometimes he fell short of his allotted task, but not often: and he would make it up another day. But he never forced himself. When he had finished his writing for the day, he usually read it over to me: and he read or wrote letters until we went for a walk. This was our habit day by day." Here Keats was working on schedule; later he never forced himself to write, once telling his publisher, Taylor, that "if poetry comes not naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all." It is a coincidence that Keats's wonderful year was the same as Shelley's—1819, Keats being then stimulated by his passion for Fanny Brawne, perhaps also by the hectic ravages of tuberculosis in his system. It is remarkable that during this year Keats hated to work, because of the fever and excitement that composition left behind it. He wrote the first draft of *The Eve of St. Agnes* while visiting in Chichester, in moments stolen from the "dowagers' card parties." More than a year before Haydon had taken him to see the Elgin Marbles, and he was so moved by them that not only did they set him off on *Endymion*, but now, in the spring of 1819, it was they, not an urn, that motivated the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Then followed rapidly the odes: *On Melancholy*, *To a Nightingale* and *On Indolence*. Keats's friend Brown, with whom he was then living, gave the following account of the composition of the *Nightingale* in his garden: "In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morn-

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ing he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind some books." The crumpled state of the manuscript corroborates this account of Keats's indifferent treatment of it. He made a few corrections of the poem, the most important being of the most famous lines of the most famous stanza. These, in the first draft, were:

The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd the wide casements, opening on the foam  
Of keelless seas, in faery lands forlorn.

This same year of 1819 produced also *Hyperion*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, *Lamia* and the ode *To Autumn*. Keats wrote a small hand.

During the War of 1812, Key, then District Attorney of Washington, "was proceeding to procure the release of a friend from the British fleet near Baltimore. At the mouth of the Patuxent he was taken prisoner and, to prevent the disclosure of the proposed attack on Baltimore, detained on one of the British ships. The attack came off as scheduled and lasted through most of the night, while Key from a port-hole caught fleeting glimpses by "the rocket's red glare" and "bombs bursting in air" of the unsurrendered standard flying over Fort McHenry. By "the morning's first beam," when the unsuccessful attack had quieted, he saw it shining "in full glory," and promptly wrote the national anthem on the back of an envelope. He was released that day; the verses were immediately printed and set to the tune "Anacreon in Heaven," and became the most popular song of the period.

Emerson did most of his composing in his study on the ground floor of the house on the Concord-Boston turnpike. It had "a bright crimson carpet, a gray sprigged wall-paper, red velvet chairs, a round mahogany table, a rocking chair in the centre, a fireplace with a stove, . . . books to the ceiling on one side, engravings on the walls, heads of Goethe,

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Dante, Pindar, Virgil, Newton, . . . a little bronze figure of Goethe on the mantel, . . . Flaxman's statuette of Psyche with the butterfly wings, . . . over the fireplace a copy of Michaelangelo's *Three Fates*, made by young Wall of New Bedford," and in the western window "when the fresh wind blew" an æolian harp whose tinkling mingled with the perpetual conclave of the birds in the big balsam outside. Here he composed, sitting in the rocking-chair, and dropping the pages on the floor as he finished them. His anodyne for all difficulties was work and more work, whether inspired or not. He toiled unceasingly over his verses, as he did over his *Journals*, but he was indifferent to publication. Emerson wrote a large, flowing hand.

Longfellow got his material from books and was not interested in details of imagery or action. He never visited Acadia, nor left his study for half a day to run down to Plymouth. And he never saw an Indian. Longfellow wrote on printing paper, sometimes with a quill pen, sometimes with a soft pencil. His handwriting was scrupulously regular, being perfectly vertical and rounded, each letter distinctly shaped, and between the verses the exact space of half an inch.

Poe thought out *Eureka* by wrapping himself in his old army cloak and pacing the veranda of the cottage at Fordham, night after night. His aunt-mother-in-law, Mrs. Clemm, said that when he began to compose, "he used to walk up and down the garden, his arm around me, mine around him, until I was so tired I could not walk." Usually, however, Poe composed at his desk, sitting in absolute silence for hours but for the motion of tracing out his delicate, clear handwriting. He made up his manuscript in a peculiar way, writing on half sheets of paper which he pasted together at the ends into a continuous scroll, which he rolled up tightly; and when he read aloud he unrolled it, letting it fall on the floor like modern ticker-tape. He apparently composed mostly in his head, for these manuscript scrolls rarely showed any corrections. Poe didn't like to be alone, and when he was composing at his desk, usually at night, Mrs. Clemm used to sit up with him, sometimes until four or five in the morn-

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ing. As he wrote she dozed, awaking every hour or so to bring him hot coffee.

Most of Tennyson's best work resulted from the death of his friend Hallam, when he was twenty-three—*Break, Break, Break*, *The Two Voices*, *Ulysses* and *In Memoriam*. Though he worked over the last for seventeen years before publishing it, these, and much more of his best, were written in the “ten silent years” from twenty-three to thirty-three. During much of this period he lived alone and wrote in a solitary little orange-colored cottage at Marblethorpe, by the shore of the North Sea. Tennyson once said, “The easiest things are hardest to be done: and . . . the hardest things are easiest to be done. I feared for years to touch the subject of the ‘Holy Grael,’ and when I began, finished it in a fortnight.” This was after his marriage, when he was living at Farringford, on the Isle of Wight, and doing his work in a little summer house in the garden covered with every imaginable extravagance of Victorian ornamentation. Here he wrote the *Idylls of the King*, having made the first prose sketch of it twenty-three years before and having planned it ever since. Here also he did *Enoch Arden* and *Crossing the Bar*, the latter in his eighty-first year. The bar was the bar across the harbor at Farringford, and the poem was written after a stormy night-passage. Browning thought Tennyson hurt his work by too much revision—“Tennyson reads the *Quarterly* and does all they bid him with the most solemn face in the world—out goes this, in goes that, all is changed and ranged. Oh me!” Tennyson suspected his own fluency, and destroyed much, Lady Tennyson on one occasion recovering *The Brook* from the scrap basket. She used to make him pretty little manuscript books, in which he indited in his minute hand. He once said that great men usually wrote “terse hands.” In his seventies, having gout in his right hand, he often could only dictate.

Jones Very, the mystic, fully accepted the doctrine of the Unconscious. He wrote “in obedience to the Spirit” and so “did not feel at liberty . . . to correct his verses for the press.”

In *Paracelsus*, Browning was accused of verbosity. So in

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his next poem, *Sordello*, he aimed at concentration and got unintelligibility. Westland Marston, to whom he showed the *Sordello* manuscript, said: "Browning's system of composition is to write down on a slate, in prose, what he wants to say, and then turn it into verse, striving after the greatest amount of condensation possible; thus if an exclamation will suggest his meaning, he substitutes this for a whole sentence." Macready being in a hurry for *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, Browning wrote it in five days—which I suspect of being a record for a full-length play. He seldom corrected his work, once it was written, and never deleted anything—"Leave out anything? Certainly not. What I have written I have written." He wrote a minute hand and used to amuse children by writing out the Lord's Prayer so small that he could cover it with a shilling. Browning was not very prolific during his marriage, *Men and Women* being his only important production during this period. After Mrs. Browning's death and the months of torpor following it, he dedicated himself to regular work, and produced more than in all his life before.

Elizabeth Barrett wrote the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* mostly during her engagement to Browning, and finished them after the marriage. One morning while they were living at Pisa, Browning was standing in the dining-room looking out the window, waiting for the breakfast dishes to be cleared away that he might go to work at his desk, which was in the same room. Mrs. Browning had gone upstairs, and the servant was out of the room. He heard some one behind him and hands seized his shoulders preventing him from looking around. Mrs. Browning dropped in his pocket the package of sonnets, tied with a ribbon, whispered to him not to look at the package till she was gone, and if he didn't like it to destroy it. Then she fled. Subsequently Mrs. Browning said that "being too happy doesn't agree with literary activity." The Brownings didn't copy over their poems, but dictated them to a transcriber, and didn't show them to each other till they were finished. At Pisa they separated after breakfast, Elizabeth to her room upstairs, Robert to his desk in the dining-room. Later, in the Casa

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Guidi, in Florence, Browning had a study full of busts and casts. In her room, adorned with pictures of the saints, Dante's profile, Keats's death-mask and large mirrors, Mrs. Browning worked in a deep chair covered with green velvet, or reclined on a sofa covered with the same. Beside the chair was her writing table, and around the room presentation copies of authors.

When Whitman was about thirty he began to jot in little notebooks miscellaneous ideas, detached figures of speech, descriptions of his ideal man and of his ideal country. He began his book shortly after an illumination stimulated by Emerson's *Essays*, which he read when he was thirty-four. He wrote anywhere at all, and seems to have been indifferent to distractions. He frequently wrote in the balcony at the Opera House, or at home while his brother Jeff played the violin in the adjoining room.

Morris's dictum that "if a chap can't compose an epic while he's weaving tapestry, he had better shut up," expressed both his theory and his constant practice.

Rossetti worked perpetually either at painting or writing, and had no recreations. He was often desultory in his work, but was incapable of diversion, never rested until he was exhausted, and habitually worked all night. He wrote easily in youth, and read his things to his friends, especially Swinburne, as soon as he had written them. In his later years he lost his fluency and wrote slowly, deliberately, and exhaustingly, not from inspiration but "in agony," which sometimes caused physical prostration. He did not feel sure of a poem until he saw it in print, and did most of his correcting in proof. His handwriting in youth was small and crabbed, but later grew into a large, "bold sweep."

Christina Rossetti scribbled her poems on odds and ends of notepaper, sitting at the corner of her wash-stand, often at the rate of two or three a day.

Emily Brontë wrote her poetry in secret, in odd moments while doing the household chores, or while sitting up waiting for her drunken brother to come in. One day sister Charlotte discovered the manuscript by chance and with great difficulty and tact persuaded her to try to publish the poems, along

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with Charlotte's own and their brother Bramwell's. So they sent out their volume under the names of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell.

Emily Dickinson also wrote in secret, tying up her poems in slender packages "with a single thread," sometimes leaving them at an appointed place in the hedge for "Sister Sue," her brother's wife who lived next door, sometimes sending them by personal messenger to this, her one confidante. Finally and without authority, Sue published one of the poems anonymously, and confessed to Emily in the darkest privacy, to the fluttering terror of both conspirators. Miss Dickinson composed very rapidly, "as if to dictation," then spent years correcting her things, and never really considered anything finished. At her death she left some 1200 poems, most of them in a box, in her bureau, which she had told her sister Lavinia she might destroy. After Lavinia had burned up a great deal of the manuscript, not knowing what it was, she grew curious and investigated, decided that Emily merely gave her *discretion* to destroy them, and so preserved what remained. The evolution of Miss Dickinson's calligraphy was unique. As a girl she learned and practiced the discreet, regular hand common to well-bred young ladies of the period. After the dissolution of her love affair, her hand became tiny and crabbed. Then slowly it swelled, until in the full poetic period it was a big spacious roll, getting only two or three words on a line and only a dozen or so on a normal page. She composed her poems straight along, indicating neither punctuation, lines nor stanzas.

"In 1861 Julia Ward Howe visited the military camp near Washington and saw the young soldiers march out to the song 'John Brown's Body.' Stirred not only by the sight but by the spirit which seemed to her a fiery gospel, she wrote new words to the same tune," the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

Meredith worked either in his big, sunny sitting-room, or in his "chalet"—a study outside the house, the floor of which was always strewn with miscellaneous books, and where he habitually shut himself up from ten to six and forbade all intrusion. He sometimes slept in the chalet.

## AT WORK

Swinburne was an odd combination of the inspirational writer and the conscientious craftsman. He usually sat down to write deliberately, having an idea to work out, and, at least in his early years, worked slowly and with no confidence, and kept his things by him for years before publishing them. On the other hand, whole stanzas often came to him in his sleep and he would leap up and write them down. He claimed to have composed in this way the whole of *A Vision of Spring and Winter*. Instead of correcting, he often tore up whole manuscripts and rewrote them out of his prodigious memory. On one occasion the Reverend Stubbs, whom Swinburne was visiting, objected to certain passages in a drama which the poet had read aloud. Swinburne screamed and ran upstairs. In the morning the Reverend Stubbs apologized for his unfortunate criticism; but Swinburne explained that it was all right, that he had lighted the fire in the grate with the manuscript but had then sat up all night and rewritten it all from memory. His self-critical faculty seems not to have been very certain in detail. There is a legend that the Archbishop of Canterbury, having heard him read *Atalanta in Calydon*, in the house where they were both visiting, objected that the poem was too long. Swinburne rushed to his room and spent the night in revision. In the morning he announced triumphantly that he had excised two lines, which he certainly had, but in the excitement of the moment he had added some one hundred and twenty. Swinburne's hand was so weak that he had trouble writing, and the result was almost illegible. Being thus troubled, he worked out everything carefully in his head before transcribing, and, in his maturity learning to make corrections without completely rewriting, he never copied over the corrected work, but would send the horribly mangled and interlined original manuscript for the printer to decipher.

Riley, when he wanted to write, used to leave Greenfield and take a room in a neighboring town at ten cents a day.

In spite of lifelong physical suffering Stevenson published an average of 400 pages a year for twenty years. During one period he had had a dangerous hemorrhage and was ordered to keep absolute silence, was in continual pain

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from sciatica, had his right arm bound to his side, was suffering from an eye disease and was kept in a dark room; yet under these circumstances he composed much of the *Child's Garden of Verses*. Later he wrote to Meredith: "For fourteen years I have not had a day's real health; I have awakened sick and gone to bed weary; . . . I have written in bed and written out of it, written in hemorrhages, written in sickness, written torn by coughing, written when my head swam for weakness. . . ." His prose tales often came to him as dreams. "In the small hours one morning," writes his wife, "I was awakened by cries of horror from Louis. Thinking he had a nightmare I awakened him. He said angrily: 'Why did you awaken me? I was dreaming a fine bogey tale.' " This was *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In Samoa he rose at six and worked alone until eight, when his step-daughter appeared and took his dictation, always until noon and sometimes all day. Stevenson knew no rules of grammar and never learned to spell.

Field was an exquisite calligrapher.

Francis Thompson scribbled his verse on "nibs of paper" or in "penny exercise books." He left *Sister Songs* in a copy book on the Meynells' mantel with a note, as a Christmas present for Mrs. Meynell. On the death of Rhodes, Lewis Hind, editor of *The Academy*, asked Thompson for an ode on Rhodes by Thursday, when *The Academy* went to press at eight. On Thursday he sent Thompson three telegrams, and at six-thirty the poet arrived, taking from his pocket crumpled scraps of paper, each of them a fragment of the satisfactorily finished ode.

## EXERCISE

With the anemic tradition of the 'nineties yet surviving in popular superstition, it is comforting to find that the great poets, with the exception of Gray and Cowper, have been imbued with physical energy far above the average, and that

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with the exception of Donne, Pope and Rossetti, they have habitually expressed this energy in some kind of vigorous exercise—even Cowper, whenever he was able, took walks “in good earnest.” It is true, as will be noticed in the next section, that there has been a list of poets whose vigor has been infected with chronic ill health or restrained by some physical disability, and that this condition has affected their work and may even, in some cases, have accounted for their turning to poetry; and it is true that this list includes such imposing names as Donne, Swift, Pope, Cowper, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, Emerson and Francis Thompson. But with the exception of Donne every one of these practiced some form of physical exercise to the limit of his endurance which, in every case but that of Pope, was considerable. Sick as Swift and Coleridge were, I wonder how many men of other professions could have kept pace with them on the road. Lame and under-nourished as Byron was, how many men today could keep up with him swimming? Consumptive as Keats was, he was a match with his fists for anybody of his weight. The fact is that, with the omission of Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare, of whom our knowledge is insufficient, the greatest poets have all been men of gigantic energy which has demanded expression through their muscles as well as through their brains, and has led them to excel their neighbors in physical as well as in mental activity and endurance. There have been plenty of pale and physically indolent singers, but with the exception of Donne, Gray and Rossetti, literature could dispense with them. And the work of these three fine talents is below the greatest in just about the proportion that they devoted all their energy to it, at the expense of bodily exercise. Against them stands the array of Sidney, Milton, Swift, Crabbe, Burns, Wordsworth, Scott, Coleridge, Landor, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Emerson, Tennyson, Browning, Whitman, Meredith and Swinburne. Cowper took walks to the limit of his frail vitality; Poe was an athlete as a boy; and Francis Thompson, though ridiculously inept in his physical gestures, yet expended prodigious energy in walking in his own awkward and uncertain way.

While the eighteen years' prisoner of Henry IV of Eng-

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land, the young James I of Scotland learned to excel in all knightly athletics.

Ben Jonson, when forty and very fat, took a walking trip to Scotland.

Donne was always sickly, and probably took no exercise, except occasionally riding horseback.

Milton was proficient, by one authority, with the rapier, and by another authority with the backsword of which he recommends the use in his book on Education.

Prior, being a spare man, used to walk in the park *to get fat.*

Swift in his twenties, when living with Sir William Temple at Moorpark, being already attacked by his malady, thought exercise desirable, and ran "half a mile up and down hill every two hours." He remained a vigorous walker all his life, and at the end, during his madness, was regularly on his feet ten hours a day.

Pope lacked the strength to take any regular exercise. His proudest feat was in lending his carriage to a lady who had been hurt in an upset, and walking three miles to Oxford on a sultry day.

At his house in Kew, Thomson made himself a walk between a hedge and a paling where "you may figure me walking any time of the day and sometimes at night."

At Eton, Gray, Walpole, West and Ashton always walked on a certain path which was afterwards named "the poet's walk" after Gray. Later in life he took no exercise at all.

Somerville of *The Chase* was himself a "skilful sportsman."

Although bullied and a coward at Westminster School, Cowper was good at cricket and football, and enjoyed both. In his later, half-sick and hypochondriac years he walked every day, weather permitting.

Burns had plenty of exercise in the fields in his early years. Though powerful, he was physically clumsy. An awkward rider, he once "came down with his horse and broke his right arm—before his arm was quite healed he fell and injured his leg. . . . A friend chose this time to ask for a loan."

## E X E R C I S E

Hayley, Blake's one-time patron, rode a dangerous cavalry horse, habitually holding a great umbrella over him as he rode. Just before he appeared to defend Blake in the latter's trial for sedition, he was thrown by this spirited beast, who was frightened by his suddenly furling the umbrella.

Wordsworth, though no sportsman, was of a powerful, rangy frame, and probably figures among the greatest walkers that ever lived. When he was an old man DeQuincey recorded that "these"—Wordsworth's—"identical legs must have traversed a distance of 175,000 to 180,000 English miles—a mode of exercise which, to him, stood in the stead of alcohol and all other stimulants whatsoever . . . , to which, indeed, he was indebted for a life of unclouded happiness. . . ." (It is probable that of the "unclouded happiness" we know more today than DeQuincey did; but there is no doubt that Wordsworth's long legs were the source of his splendid health and a steady influence on his spirit.) His first pedestrian venture of consequence was his continental trip, when he was twenty, with his Cambridge friend, Robert Jones, when they walked from Calais to Chalons, a distance of 350 miles, in two weeks—an average of twenty-seven miles a day. Thence they proceeded, still on foot, and at only a slightly more leisurely pace, to Lyons, to Lake Geneva, through the Simplon Pass to Lakes Maggiore and Como, and back across Switzerland to Basle, where they bought boats and floated down the Rhine to Cologne, whence they returned direct to Calais, a trip of three months with hardly a day's stop. At Alfoxden, and again at Grasmere, Wordsworth and Coleridge were forever walking, at all hours, frequently late into the night, there being no regularity in their domestic routine. Dorothy was frequently their companion on these occasions, as well as on many of their more pretentious way-farings. In fact walking was one of the means, along with the excessive imposition of literary and domestic duties, that Wordsworth used to wear down his gallant sister into her final collapse. After they were expelled from Alfoxden for being liberals, they walked to Nether Stowey, where they passed a week with Coleridge, then to Bristol, where they passed another week with Cottle,

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then to the Wye and ten miles beyond to the ruins of Tintern Abbey, then several days' trips out from the Abbey and return, and finally back to Bristol by boat. Shortly thereafter they spent eight months with the Hutchinsons, until William picked out their new home at Grasmere. Thither they set out on horseback, accompanied by two or more of the Hutchinsons, "starting early on a December morning, crossing the Tweed in the Sockburn fields by moonlight, and travelling over frozen roads, through furious wind and snow, as far as Wensley Dale. There they left the Hutchinsons and, in the same weather, did the remaining twenty miles or so on foot. Several years later we get the picture of another equestrian venture when, returning from Eusemere, Wordsworth and Dorothy tried riding the same horse, but presently gave it up and took to their feet. Later there was the walking and carriage trip over the length and breadth of Scotland, through all manner of weather, when Wordsworth and Dorothy wore Coleridge out. But between these major ventures, and every day and night, there was the ceaseless beat of Wordsworth's feet up and down the steeps of the Lake Country around Grasmere. When he was sixty few of the "hardiest and youngest" were a match for him at climbing mountains. He was also a strong swimmer, and the "crack skater" on Rydal Lake. And he was frequently busy at divers culinary and domestic exercises, fishing, setting pike floats, cutting down trees. A characteristic entry in Dorothy's *Journal* is, "William stuck peas."

Although Coleridge as a little boy was "huffed away" by shyness "from the enjoyments of muscular activity," he was no weakling, and only a little behind Wordsworth as a pedestrian. He was one of the best walkers and swimmers at Christ's Hospital. In her *Grasmere Journals* Dorothy Wordsworth frequently made entries of this kind (the distance from Coleridge's home at Keswick to Grasmere was thirteen miles, and Helvellyn a big mountain with no road over it): "At 11 o'clock Coleridge came, when I was walking in the still clear moonshine in the garden. He came over Helvellyn. William was gone to bed, and John also. . . . We sat and chatted till half-past three." In 1802 Coleridge

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started on the Scotch tour with the Wordsworths, but their indifference to the climate seems to have been too much for him, for he presently was making short-cuts to await them in comfort, and wrote to his wife that "sitting in an open carriage in the rain is death to me, and somehow or other I had not been quite comfortable." Coleridge was, not long after this, a rather pathetic liar in all matters reflecting on his consistency and self-control, but his next letter to his wife certainly implies that if his health was uncertain his pluck was not. After a week or so of being "not quite comfortable" with the Wordsworths, he decided to leave them and set out on his own: "I have resolved to eke out my cash . . . , and to walk along the whole line of the Forts. I am unfortunately shoeless; there is no town where I can get a pair, and I have no money to spare to buy them, so I expect to enter Perth barefooted. I burnt my shoes in drying them at the boatman's hovel on Loch Katrine, and I have by this means hurt my heel. Likewise my left leg is a little inflamed, and the rheumatism in the right of my head afflicts me sorely when I begin to grow warm in my bed, chiefly in my right eye, ear, cheek, and the three teeth; but, nevertheless, I am enjoying myself, having Nature with solitude and liberty—the liberty natural and solitary, the solitude natural and free. . . . I take no opiates." In December of that same year, 1802, trying to escape from dejection, he fled from his home into the night and walked 263 miles in eight days. About a year later, when he was on his way to Malta in a last attempt to gather his self-control, we have a glimpse of Coleridge, as he wrote, "scrambling about the rock among the monkeys in a pair of silk stockings and nankeen pantaloons."

Being lame, Scott became a daring rider as a boy, and remained so always. Almost to the day of his death he was leaping ditches and fording dangerous streams.

Landor never learned to dance. He was adept at fishing with a cast-net.

Byron, being club-footed and so disqualified for most sports, made himself some reputation as a swimmer. This is the account of his friend Trelawney, himself beyond

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question a fine athlete (note the three miles to the *Bolivar*, Byron's yacht; also the ale and the cigar!): "He bragged too of his prowess in riding, boxing, fencing, and even walking; but to excel in these things feet are as necessary as hands. It was difficult to avoid smiling at his boasting and self-glorification. In the water a fin is better than a foot, and in that element he did well; he was built for floating—with a flexible body, open chest, broad beam, and round limbs. If the sea was smooth and warm, he would stay in it for hours; but as he seldom indulged in this sport, and when he did, over-exerted himself, he suffered severely; which observing, and knowing how deeply he would be mortified at being beaten, I had the magnanimity when contending with him, to give in. He had a misgiving in his mind that I was trifling with him; and one day as we were on the shore,"—near Pisa—"and the *Bolivar* at anchor, about three miles off, he insisted on our trying conclusions; we were to swim to the yacht, dine in the sea alongside her, treading water the while, and then return to the shore. It was calm and hot, and seeing he would not be fobbed off, we started. I reached the boat a long time before he did; ordered the edibles to be ready, and floated until he arrived. We ate our fare leisurely, from off a grating that floated alongside, drank a bottle of ale, and I smoked a cigar, which he tried to extinguish,—as he never smoked. We then put about and struck off towards the shore. We had not got a hundred yards on our passage, when he retched violently, and, as that is often followed by a cramp, I urged him to put his hand on my shoulder that I might tow him back to the schooner. 'Keep off, you villain, don't touch me. I'll drown ere I give in.' I answered as Iago did to Roderigo: "A fig for drowning! drown cats and blind puppies." I shall go on board and try the effects of a glass of grog to stay my stomach.' 'Come on,' he shouted, 'I am always better after vomiting.' With difficulty I deluded him back; I went on board, and he sat on the steps of the accommodation-ladder, with his feet in the water. I handed him a wine-glass of brandy, and screened him from the burning sun. He was in a sullen mood, but after a time resumed his usual tone. Nothing could induce

## EXERCISE

him to be landed in the schooner's boat, though I protested I had had enough of the water. 'You may do as you like,' he called out, and plumped in, and we swam on shore. He never afterwards alluded to this event, nor to his prowess in swimming, to me, except in the past tense. He was ill, and kept to his bed for two days afterwards."

Keats was an all-round healthy, athletic youngster, and as late as 1819, a little over a year before his death, he got a black eye from a cricket ball. He was a good boxer as a boy, and in his later years was never averse to a fight upon provocation. The most consistent piece of violent exercise Keats ever undertook was the walking trip with his sturdy friend, Brown, in Scotland, in 1818, rising at four or five in the morning, making long tramps day after day and clambering up the mountains. After climbing Ben Nevis he wrote his brother Tom, describing the usual discouragements of amateur climbing—one height gained and another far above, and the peak not yet in sight—and thus recounts the final pull: "I have said nothing yet of our getting on among the loose stones large and small sometimes on two, sometimes on three, sometimes on four legs—sometimes two and stick, sometimes three and stick, so that we kept on ringing the changes on foot, hand, stick, jump, boggle, stumble, foot, hand, foot (very gingerly), stick again and then again a game at all fours." The tuberculosis was at this time already far advanced in Keats's throat, and a doctor ordered him home from Inverness. In Rome, during the faint flurry of hope for his recovery, he walked a good deal around the city and rode horseback "at a snail's pace."

Bryant, having begun life on the farm, kept up regular exercise all his life. At seventy-seven he still walked for a few hours every day, and began each morning with a set of calisthenics.

Emerson was a good trumper, and usually started the day with a walk, having a habit of reciting ballads to himself as he paced along. When he was sixty he built, with the help of Thoreau, a snow-house, to show that any kind of life could be lived in Concord. At sixty-three he climbed Monadnock, and at sixty-five, Mansfield. At seventy-eight he

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was still swimming in Walden Pond, and never bothered about a towel.

Longfellow was not much for exercise, and did his walking mildly on his own veranda. He once told Howells that one got a great deal of exercise in putting on and off one's overcoat and overshoes.

Poe, as a boy, was pretty good in athletics, and once swam six miles in the James River, and walked home. After his wife's death he took "abundance of exercise in the open air."

Tennyson, as a boy, was a "fervent and awe-inspiring dancer." He was a powerful youth: once showing off a pony, he picked it up and carried it, and he could hurl the crow-bar farther than any of the peasants in the village. At Cambridge he rowed, fenced and took long walks. During the "ten silent years" he frequently went on solitary walking trips pretty much all over England, stopping at village inns. Later, at Farringford, he always mowed his own lawn, wearing a black sombrero and spectacles. His enormous vitality lasted until his death. Beside doing a stupendous amount of work of high quality, and learning Hebrew, he scaled the Dent du Chat at sixty-three, and at eighty, waltzed with Miss Brookfield, took walks with the Princess Louise and performed regular gymnastic exercises on the floor.

As a boy Browning studied and became proficient in dancing, riding, boxing and fencing, founding a powerful physique which always stood by him. When he was seventy-three he took a seven-hour walk with his sister in Switzerland, from Gressoney Saint-Jean down to San Martino d'Aosto.

As a young man Whitman used, habitually, to take the Brooklyn omnibus to the end of the line, then strike off on foot across the fields. Although he delighted to watch all kinds of sports, he was himself no athlete—"more a floater than a swimmer." Swimming was in fact his favorite exercise, and he pursued it daily, naked, at Gray's Salt Water Baths, at the foot of Fulton Street. In his old age he used to take sun-baths at Whitehorse, near Camden, and also bathed in the mud of a marl pit.

## E X E R C I S E

Emily Brontë loved to walk on the moors.

Rossetti's life "was rounded by buses and Swinburne's by cabs." Rossetti "never stood up when he could sit, or sat when he could lie down."

Swinburne never played any games, but he had great physical endurance, and was a fine walker and swimmer. When he was seventeen, he climbed an unscalable headland on the Isle of Wight to prove to himself that he was no coward. Once, while swimming at Etretat, he was carried far out by the tide and was almost drowned, being at last picked up by a fishing boat and carried in, wrapped in a sail.

Meredith had a powerful physique and played cricket, boxed and rode to hounds, besides exercising regularly with iron weights and heavy clubs which he used to throw in the air and catch, far along into middle life. He walked and climbed mountains swiftly and daily, swinging a stick, and preferring to have a companion, to whom he talked the while with great animation.

At school Francis Thompson was good at handball, but generally was a physical weakling and engaged in none of the rougher sports. From boyhood on he walked with his peculiar, hesitating, irregular gait in all weather, and probably spent more time on the streets of London than anywhere else in the city. The Meynells used to send him out skating with their children, and he found it very exciting, much more so than they did, for they were far more proficient than he was. Sometimes he bathed "timidly" in the ocean.

When Stevenson was living at Lake Saranac, what most impressed the natives was he and Lloyd Osborne skating on the lake in straw hats. At Samoa he rode and walked for exercise.

"At Oxford Wilde came under the influence of Ruskin and became one of the 'ardent young men' who helped in his practical efforts at realizing the 'Gospel of Labour.' . . . On gray November mornings Wilde would be seen breaking stones on the highway and filling Ruskin's wheelbarrow for him. . . . These young men came, not for the sake of the gospel, but for the subsequent breakfast parties and informal talks which Ruskin gave in his rooms at the 'Corpus.' "

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### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Page 238, Milton. See his walking and swinging, *Domestic Habits, Crotchets and Accidents*, p. 181.

Page 238, Cowper. See his daily walk in *Domestic Habits, Crotchets and Accidents*, p. 183.

Pages 240-1, Coleridge. See his swim at Christ's Hospital, *Health*, p. 251.

Page 243, Keats. See his fighting, *In Action*, p. 399.

Page 245, Meredith. See his walk up and down Box Hill, *Domestic Habits, Crotchets and Accidents*, p. 188.

### HEALTH

At various places in this book I have set out the hypothesis that the distinguishing mark of the poet is the conviction that he bears within himself some ultimate and communicable truth and is therefore special among men. In the case of several of the great poets—notably the young Milton, Wordsworth, Browning and Whitman—this conceit alone seems to be all that clearly marks them off from the generality. But it seems reasonable to suppose that the sense of distinction might be at least encouraged by other factors tending more or less to disqualify the poet from participation in ordinary affairs. Among these may be ill-health. In the preceding section I argued that frailty of physique seldom accompanied the highest poetic talent and lack of energy still more rarely—the only important exceptions being Gray and Cowper. But granted a constitutionally strong body or at least excessive physical energy, it is noticeable that most of the great poets have suffered from some annoying indisposition, not sufficient to sap their energies or incapacitate them from work, yet enough to invite, more or less constantly, their attention upon themselves. There seems to be, in many cases, some connection between physical indisposition and intense imaginative activity, and it is my guess, as Donne stated, that the former is the cause, the latter the effect. The presence of some infection in an otherwise strong physique will be found in the case of each of

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the following: Donne, Burns, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, Emerson, Tennyson, Francis Thompson and Milton in his old age. In addition to these Pope, Gray, Cowper, Whittier and Stevenson were sick men, besides being frail of physique; Shelley, though suffering from no known chronic ailment, was forever having breakdowns in his periods of intense composition; and Rossetti, though originally robust, destroyed his health by irregular habits.

With the exception of Keats, Francis Thompson and Stevenson, the complaints of each of the above poets was mysterious and neurotic, and it may be found some day that they all suffered from the same Poet's Disease, a faint infection associated with imagination and usually found attacking an otherwise healthy body. When the disease is finally isolated and described it will be found, I suspect, to have at least two symptoms: Hypochondria—which noticeably characterized Donne, Pope, Gray, Cowper, Coleridge, Emerson, Tennyson; and a peculiar condition which might be called Barometrisis, an intense sensitiveness to climate and an almost prophetic susceptibility to changes in the weather —a symptom on record as apparent in Cowper, Coleridge, Shelley and Thompson.

Tuberculosis is supposed, in certain phases, to give a hectic stimulus to the imagination. It is noticeable that Lovelace, J. Phillips, Bruce, Hughes, Tannahill, Wolfe, Logan, Keats, Pollok, Drake, Brainard, Nicoll, Emily Brontë, David Gray, Lanier, Stevenson, Dowson and Thompson had it, and that two of these figure among our twenty important poets. Also Emerson was at least threatened with consumption as a young man.

Besides disease I shall mention in this section the general vitality or lack of vitality of the poets, and various collateral, physical matters such as the condition of their senses. Four poets—"Blind Harry," Blacklock, Frances Browne, P. B. Marston—were blind from childhood; and four others—Milton, Gower, Congreve and Wolcot—went blind in later life, Milton writing the epics in darkness.

In the poverty that depressed the end of his life Ben Jonson suffered two strokes.

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The exact nature of Donne's lifelong complaint is not known. It may have been recurrent quinsy. Its effect seemed to be a "gradual burning away of the intestines," and the attacks—always brought on by overwork or cold—consisted of violent intestinal pain, emaciation and debility, neurosis and hypochondria. During his worst year, his thirty-eighth, living in his "hospital" with "paper walls," Donne was constantly afflicted with gastric and rheumatic troubles, and almost went blind. During the same year his wife was sick most of the time and three out of their eight children died. In 1618 he was suspected of having consumption, and the King attached him as chaplain to the Bohemian diplomatic mission in order to give him a rest. He expected to die, but in fact returned much improved. In 1623 he participated in the ceremonies of the admission of sergeants at Lincoln's Inn and, after a very fatiguing day, marched to St. Paul's in a procession in the pouring rain, and preached there. He had a violent attack, was supposed to be dying, and the King sent his private physician. Donne insisted on writing in bed, and noted that when the physical stamina was low the spiritual senses were quickened; he was much annoyed because it was supposed that his malady was infectious, and no one was allowed to visit him. His final attack occurred in August, 1630, when he was fifty-seven and visiting his daughter in the country.

Milton had constant headaches and his eyesight, though quick for fencing, was never strong. He took constant "physics" in the hope of preserving it. It began definitely to decline in 1638, when he was thirty years old; by 1650 the sight of the left eye was entirely gone, and the doctor warned him that if he continued reading and writing he would lose the sight of the other eye also. Milton was then engaged on his famous Latin *Defensio* in reply to Salmasius, a work which he considered the loftiest of patriotic duties, and he records his determination to sacrifice his sight to this piece of scurrilous eloquence: "The choice lay before me between dereliction of a supreme duty and loss of eyesight; in such a case I could not listen to the physician . . . ; I could not but obey that inward monitor, I know not what,

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that spoke to me from heaven. I considered . . . that many had purchased less good with worse evil, as they who give their lives to reap only glory, and I thereupon concluded to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy in doing this, the greatest service to the common weal it was in my power to render." Two years later he was totally blind; but he believed that in completing the *Defensio* he had effected the "supreme service" he intended. In his old age Milton's hands were knotty with gout.

"Davenant's nose suffered such diminution by mishaps among the women, that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him."

Lovelace, when released from prison in abject poverty, took consumption.

Very early Swift contracted a peculiar disease which pursued him through life and finally killed him. Its evidences were giddiness and deafness, and he thought it was brought on by eating too much fruit. Besides his chronic troubles, Swift determined never to wear spectacles, as a result of which the agony of his last years was increased by inability to read. When he was sixty-one he had an attack of his disorder while visiting Pope, and left the latter's house suddenly and without ceremony, saying that "two sick friends cannot live together." Eight years later he had a violent and prolonged fit while working on a poem called *The Legion Club*, after which he declined steadily. At the end he was imbecilic, covered with boils, developed an eye tumor, and it took the constant attention of six servants to prevent his tearing out his eye.

John Phillips had lifelong asthma and "a slow consumption."

Pope was a sickly solitary child, inheriting headaches from his mother and a crooked figure from his father. He quit school at twelve, at home worked himself into a breakdown, and at seventeen wrote a farewell to his friends. Altogether his little "crazy carcass" was seldom free from agony for many days together; in his average week he had headaches four days and was sick the other three. In his later years he was so weak he could not rise and dress him-

self, and so sensitive to cold that he wore a fur doublet under a coarse linen shirt. One side was contracted so that he could not stand upright till laced into a bodice of stiff canvas, and his legs were so thin that he wore three pairs of stockings which he could not draw on and off without help.

Gay's health always reacted immediately to his successes or failures. When he lost £20,000 on the South Sea venture he suffered a dangerous physical collapse, out of which Pope personally nursed him back to health. His health took a spurt after the success of the *Beggar's Opera*, but, remaining in continuous discountenance at court, he sank into permanent melancholy.

Prior was frail, bronchial and partially deaf.

Gray was weakly from infancy, having a quiveringly low vitality which recoiled in agony from all energetic contacts. This helplessness took the form of indolence in creative effort, made him absurdly hypochondriac, prevented him from loving a woman, and kept him out of society. From his fortieth year he was afflicted with miscellaneous pains and aches, including gout. When he was forty-eight he had some kind of an operation, extremely serious and painful, without which it was supposed he would have died.

Cowper's insanity was based in hypochondria which in turn was based in only moderately bad chronic indigestion. He was an extreme barometric poet, his melancholia always vanishing before sunshine.

Crabbe was subject to vertigo based in bad digestion.

Burns ruined his digestion in boyhood by gulping his food at meals in order to escape into solitude to read. In maturity he wrote, "I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout;—a damnable business!"

Bloomfield suffered from continual headaches and nervous irritability to the verge of insanity.

Rogers's recipe for a long life was, "temperance, the bath and flesh brush, and don't fret."

Wordsworth had enormous vitality and both mental and physical endurance. Until his last illness he was never really sick a day in his life. In December, 1799, when he and Dorothy settled in Dove Cottage, Grasmere, they had no

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furniture, no money, bad colds, and the chimneys wouldn't draw. Yet Wordsworth, writing Coleridge on Christmas Eve, was all enthusiasm about the place. In his fifties his sight began to fail, due to inflamed eyelids, and he had to give up all reading and writing. Unlike Milton, he did not feel the call of any high duty, and so did not go blind.

While a boy at Christ's Hospital, Coleridge never had enough to eat and "was in a continual low fever." When he was seventeen he swam the New River in his clothes, let them dry on his back, was confined to the sick ward for almost six months with jaundice and rheumatic fever, and to this adventure his subsequent ill health is generally attributed—his rheumatism and his abnormal fits of melancholy. Yet Coleridge, although of great bodily strength and vigor, seems from childhood to have been infected with whatever virus it is that, working in the nervous system, affects health and imagination at the same intermittent times so that each is excruciatingly sensitive both to the other and to the subtlest changes of external environment, either physical or personal. Like Cowper, Coleridge was a barometric poet, and his health and spirits not only went up and down with his personal adjustment but went in and out of clouds with the sun.

In babyhood Scott was lamed by a fever, but by the time he graduated from college he was robust, and remained so.

Lamb and Hunt both stammered, as a result of which they were disqualified from orders and so from university.

Landor had gout as a child, which he resented with loud roars. In maturity he had annual attacks of quinsy.

Byron, by his starvation diet, undermined his health and encouraged the low malarial fevers to which, from his first visit to Italy, he was regularly subject.

Throughout his life Shelley was subject to an alternation between torpor and abnormal excitement, the latter accompanied by microscopic perception. Physically he was a healthy body, suffering from no chronic complaint, and his periods of illness were due either to excitement of his imagination or to his abuse of his physique by diet, drugs or irregular habits, or to all four causes. When he led an out-

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door life he was always well. But when he was writing—and he usually was—he drank tea and lemonade and took no exercise; then he would collapse physically; then he would take to laudanum. Not long after leaving Oxford he became a vegetarian and besides drank “no liquid except water that had been distilled.” By 1815 he was so weak that Peacock persuaded him to try some mutton chops, and his health immediately revived. In 1818, in London, he worked himself to the verge of death over the *Revolt of Islam*, and was saved by the sunshine and imagery of Italy. “In the smoke of cities and the tumult of human kind and the chilling fogs and rain of our country I can hardly be said to live.” He was, in other words, another barometric poet.

Keats is the outstanding example of a poet with a vigorous body infected with a specific and recognizable disease. His period of greatest production occurred when his consumption was already well under way, but had not yet seriously weakened his energies. Coming of a consumptive family, he had pulmonary and laryngeal tuberculosis, the latter probably showing itself early in his chronic sore throat, the former not recognized until after the latter was definitely established. There is some evidence that Keats got syphilis in Oxford, in 1817, when he was twenty-two, but it is not conclusive—“The little Mercury I have taken has corrected the poison and improved my health”; and, again writing to Bailey, who had been his host at Oxford—“I think Jane or Marianne has a better opinion of me than I deserve; for, really and truly, I do not think my Brother’s illness” (Tom’s consumption) “connected with mine—you know more of the real cause than they do; nor have I any chance of being rack’d as you have been.” If the obvious inference of this is correct, it is certain that the syphilis was promptly arrested and that Keats’s basic trouble was only too closely connected with his brother’s. During all of this time he was nursing the dying Tom in the most intimate ways, the contagion of tuberculosis not being understood in those days. In 1818 Keats, with a sick sore throat, set off on the strenuous walking trip with Brown through Scotland. From Inverness Brown wrote that Keats “caught a violent cold in

the Isle of Mull, which, far from leaving him, has become worse, and the physician here thinks him too thin and fevered to proceed on our journey." Keats went home by water to the infected *ménage* in Hampstead where his brother died three months and a half later. By the autumn of 1819 Keats was in a lethargic mood. His friends goaded him to all kinds of unwise effort, no one yet suspecting his trouble, and he further weakened himself by going vegetarian. He was secretly taking a little laudanum, to allay the suffering in his throat, not yet properly diagnosed, and for the winter of 1819-20 provided himself, on his doctor's advice, with "a warm great coat" and thick shoes. On February 3, Keats, living with Brown in Hampstead, went into London without his great coat, returned in the raw night on the top of the coach, and caught cold. Brown described what followed: "At eleven o'clock, he came into the house in a state that looked like fierce intoxication. Such a state in him, I knew, was impossible; it therefore was the more fearful. I asked hurriedly, 'What is the matter? You are fevered?' 'Yes, yes,' he answered, 'I was on the outside of the stage this bitter day till I was severely chilled,—but now I don't feel it. Fevered!—of course, a little.' He mildly and instantly yielded, a property in his nature towards any friend, to my request that he should go to bed. I entered his chamber as he lept into bed. On entering the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed, and I heard him say,—'That is blood from my mouth.' I went towards him; he was examining a single drop of blood upon the sheet. 'Bring me the candle, Brown, and let me see this blood.' After regarding it steadfastly he looked up in my face, with a calmness of countenance that I can never forget, and said,—'I know the colour of that blood;—it is arterial blood;—I can not be deceived in that colour;—that drop of blood is my death-warrant;—I must die.' I ran for a surgeon; my friend was bled; and, at five in the morning, I left him after he had been some time in a quiet sleep." From that time, with occasional faint oscillations toward recovery, the curve of Keats's health was downward till his death about a year later.

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Emerson was one of the list of poets of powerful physique in which an infection nibbled. Both of his brothers died of tuberculosis and he was certainly touched by it. Between eighteen and thirty he was often subject to a "stricture of the chest," and pathological melancholy, and throughout his life had abnormally low resistance which made prolonged effort impossible for him. But, as in the case of Coleridge, this unfatal infection was somehow identified with his imagination, and he forgot his illness when he was happy. All threat of actual consumption vanished when he summoned the will to resign from the pulpit of the Second Congregational Church of Boston, and so forever from the uncongenial clerical life; and his periods of active intercourse with his friends—Thoreau, Wolcot and Carlyle—always improved his vitality. After his house burned, in his seventieth year, he "fell into a fever; and, although he rallied soon, his memory began to fail," and soon after his eyesight and his vitality, until he could hardly work at all.

Due to early exposure and hardship, Whittier through life had bronchial weakness, dyspepsia and violent headaches. Also he injured himself permanently as a boy, swinging a flail. At thirty-three he prostrated himself working for abolition, and retired from public life forever. He once wrote of his illness, "Misery makes a man an egoist, the world over." In his later life, due to his headaches, he could not read or write beyond half an hour at a time, and that with pain.

Tennyson was short-sighted, but had very accurate vision at close range. He once recorded with pride that he "saw the moonlight reflected in a nightingale's eye, as she was singing in the hedgerow." He also boasted that he "could hear the shriek of a bat," which he said was the test of a fine ear. Tennyson, though powerful in physique, had finicky health. During his late thirties, due to irregularities of diet, abuse of his bad eyes, family worries, and the collapse of the wood-carving business venture, he had a nervous breakdown, and sank into panicky hypochondria and despair. He attended for some weeks a hydropathic establishment where the village boys made a practice of following the inmates

on the road, shouting, "Shiver and shake," and this "made him very nervous." After his marriage, in the domestic peace of Farringford, he took care of himself, enjoyed fame and his health improved. In his seventies he had gout, especially in his right hand, so he had to dictate. In the last year of his life he was going rapidly blind.

Elizabeth Barrett started life as a healthy enough outdoor girl. But when she was fifteen, while trying to saddle her pony, she fell and, the saddle falling on her, injured her spine and instituted her long, hothouse career of invalidism. When she was about thirty she "broke a blood-vessel upon the lungs, which refused to heal. On the approach of winter the family doctor ordered her to a warmer climate, and her elder brother," Edward, "who seems by all accounts to have been worthy of his sister, accompanied her to Torquay." She did not dress all winter, but was lifted from her bed to the sofa, and finally did not leave her bed at all for a month. At the end of this period her brother, to whom she was passionately devoted, was drowned in the harbor when his sailboat sank in sight of her window, and the body was not recovered. She was prostrated for months, all fearing for her life, she for her reason; and when she was moved back to London, began that strange imprisonment, immured from air and light, from which Browning rescued her six years later. One of her lungs seems to have remained weak, which caused the over-cautious physician to prescribe that she be confined to the house. It was an age when "night air," in fact fresh air generally, was greatly feared, and not only were her windows never opened but the heavy curtains were seldom drawn back, so that Miss Barrett was suffocated in perpetual twilight. It is remarkable that she withstood this process of slow murder as long as six years. "All the flowers foreswear me," she wrote, "and die either suddenly or gradually as soon as they become aware of the want of fresh air and light in my room." She escaped by eloping with Robert Browning in 1846, when she was thirty-seven, and on the birth of her son, not only her general vitality but her physical ailments were considerably improved. She remained, however, an invalid al-

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ways, and though living in Italy in plenty of air and sunshine and frequently going out to drive, actually spent most of every day either in her big green velvet chair, or on the chaise longe or the huge sofa that were everywhere part of her furniture. Browning habitually carried her upstairs to bed. The Peace of Villafranca gave her a "bad attack," after which for some time she was feverish, could not sleep for bad political dreams, and could not walk without help.

During most of his life Browning was robust, physically and nervously. During the correspondence with Miss Barrett, and before he met her, he suffered from violent headaches which he relieved by walking violently, often all night.

Fitzgerald "scorched" one eye into partial blindness "by reading these several winters with a paraffin lamp."

Whitman gloried in his powerful constitution, hated medicines and doctors, and, with the exception of his fatal collapses, was never sick. When he was about thirty he had a sunstroke, and was sensitive to heat for twenty years thereafter. When Lincoln called for volunteers in 1861, Whitman, then forty and probably too old for military service, vowed henceforth a perfect régime of diet and healthy habits "to inaugurate a sweet, clean-blooded body, a . . . spiritualized, enigorated body." In 1864, due to over-work in the military hospitals, he had a break-down from which he never quite recovered. In 1873, being then employed in the Attorney General's Office in Washington, he awoke at three o'clock one morning with his left side paralyzed, and by dawn he could not move at all. It was a stroke, and until his death nineteen years thereafter he was always more or less of an invalid, though he still scorned medical attention and until near the end had unshakable faith in his own constitution. In 1879 he was sufficiently recovered to take a trip west and to Canada. In 1888 he had his second stroke, which rendered him temporarily speechless, required a nurse, and put him in a wheel chair with a man to push it. He remained in approximately this state until his death.

Meredith had great vitality and was seldom ill. Toward the end of his life he suffered from some "unhappy afflic-

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tion" to his legs which confined him to a wheel chair. Being dangerously ill at seventy-five and the whole world hanging on the reports from the sick room, he retained his humor and recovered. When he was seventy-seven, while being assisted to a chair by his man-servant, he fell, broke both legs, and recovered completely.

After his wife's death when he was thirty-six, Rossetti's health failed. He was threatened with blindness, wore thick glasses, and saw everything through a veil of curling smoke or effervescent champagne. When he was forty-four he had a real nervous and physical breakdown from which he never recovered.

Christina Rossetti became an invalid in middle life.

When Emily Dickinson went into the garden a red army blanket was thrown on the dewy grass to prevent her taking cold, giving rise to legends of a red carpet being spread before her whenever she left the house.

From the age of twenty-five Swinburne had epileptic fits which always terrified witnesses but actually left him in fine condition as after a purging of the nerves. He drank himself into indigestion and a nervous twitch which his enemies erroneously called St. Vitus's Dance. In his forties Watts-Dunton carried him off to Putney and compelled him to lead a regular life. Here he was absolutely healthy for thirty years, and grew rapidly deaf.

Following hardships and imprisonment, for several months in the Civil War, Lanier developed consumption.

From his twelfth year Henley had a tuberculous disease and had one foot amputated before he was twenty. When he was twenty-five he was put in Edinburgh Hospital, where his leg was saved from amputation by Lister. During three years in the hospital he completed his education, living in a charity ward full of noisy children. At twenty-eight he emerged and began life as a literary man in London.

Stevenson was sickly almost from birth, being afflicted with "nervous, arterial and pulmonary troubles," which made him always susceptible to colds and later developed into tuberculosis.

Francis Thompson had great vitality coupled with appar-

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ent frailty, and a tubercular tendency which he probably staved off for years by using opium. When he was twenty-five he was rejected for the army as physically unfit. Thereafter, drugs and the extreme hardships of his life as a bum in London permanently undermined his resistance. After his discovery by the Meynells, when he was thirty, he spent over a year under medical care in Stonington Priory, overcame the drug habit, and partially recovered his health. Thereafter he was usually in some kind of physical pain, though he made nothing of it so long as his spiritual life was placid. Though sensitive to climate, he resumed his habit of walking the streets in the worst weather, and tuberculosis gradually settled on him. He was another of the barometric poets, “a weather-cock of a man. The distress of his hands, and the veering of his hair . . . would instantly proclaim an east wind.”

### DEATH

The ages and causes of the deaths of the poets have been as miscellaneous as those of the population generally, but the circumstances thereof have often exhibited an abnormally theatrical and self-conscious quality befitting the demise of important and under-appreciated persons. I have divided 184 poets into three groups according to their ages at death:

Died before 31—Chatterton (17), Pattison (19), Bruce (21), White (21), R. Middleton (22), D. Gray (23), Nicoll (23), Keats (25), Drake (25), Pinkney (25), Pollok (28), Surrey (29), Marlowe (29), Beaumont (29), Randolph (29), Farquhar (30), Emily Brontë (30), Shelley (30). Total dying before 31, 18.

Died between 31 and 61—Brainard (31), Lloyd (31), Phillis Wheatley (31), Cartwright (32), Wolfe (32), Sidney (32), R. Greene (32), J. Phillips (32), Hammond (32), Dowson (33), Suckling (33), Rochester (33), Churchill (33), Wilcox (34), Otway (34), L. Johnson (35), Crashaw (35), Byron (36), Nash (36), Pomfret (36),

Tannahill (36), Laetitia Landon (36), A. Smith (37), Gordon (37), O'Shaugnessy (37), P. B. Marston (37), Crawford (37), Falconer (37), Burns (37), Motherwell (38), Lampman (38), Parnell (38), Collins (38), Lanier (39), Wyatt (39), Poe (40), Lovelace (40), Logan (40), N. Greene (41), Southwell (42), Herbert (42), James I (43), Stevenson (44), Gay (44), Cleveland (45), Rowe (45), Savage (45), Douglas (46), Beddoes (46), Spenser (46), Goldsmith (46), Addison (47), Blair (47), Smart (48), Thurlow (48), F. Thompson (48), Thomson (48), Chivers (49), Duchess of Newcastle (49), Cowley (49), King (49), Shenstone (49), Akenside (49), Fletcher (50), Carew (50), Roscommon (50), Duke (50), Somerville (50), S. Phillips (51), Smollet (51), Davidson (52), Shakespeare (52), Quarles (52), Denham (53), Etheredge (53), Rossetti (54), Henley (54), Tickell (54), Massinger (55), Pope (56), Congreve (56), Daniel (57), Marvell (57), Prior (57), Donne (58), Barlow (58), Macauley (59), Dyer (59), Scott (59), Woodworth (59), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (60), Lamb (60). Total dying between 31 and 61, 92.

Died after 61—Warton (62), Coleridge (62), Morris (62), Dunbar (63), Davenant (63), Mallet (63), Raleigh (64), Jonson (64), Drummond (64), Christina Rossetti (64), Lyttleton (64), Hogg (65), Yalden (66), Milton (66), Granville (67), Campbell (67), T. E. Brown (67), Lyndsay (68), Drayton (68), Butler (68), Sackville (68), Lodge (69), Cowper (69), Southey (69), Dryden (70), Whitehead (70), Blake (70), Sheffield (71), Gray (71), Clare (71), Shirley (72), Melville (72), Ramsay (72), Lowell (72), Swinburne (72), Whitman (73), Moore (73), Patmore (73), Hunt (73), Greville (74), Vaughan (74), Fitzgerald (74), Wycherly (75), Swift (75), Watts (75), S. Johnson (75), Longfellow (75), Gilbert (75), Lord Houghton (76), Chapman (77), Browning (77), Sprat (78), A. Phillips (78), Wither (79), Emerson (79), Freneau (80), Wordsworth (80), Meredith (81), Young (81), Hall (82), Waller (82), Herrick (83), Tennyson (83), Churchyard (84), Joanna Baillie (84),

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Bryant (84), Cornwall (84), Holmes (85), Barnes (85), Southern (87), Wesley (87), deVere (88), Rogers (90), Julia Ward Howe (91). Total dying after 61, 74.

Of the 138 poets the manner of whose death I have found, 24 died violently. Of these 7 were suicides. Of the 114 who died in bed, 15 died of tuberculosis as listed at the beginning of the preceding section.

James I of Scotland was assassinated.

Douglas died of the plague in London in 1522.

Surrey was executed in his twenty-ninth year in pursuance of a plot, being convicted of technical treason for having borne the arms of Edward the Confessor in the French War.

In August, 1556, Sidney, being thirty-two years old and serving in Leicester's army against the Spanish in Flanders, volunteered to take part in a foolhardy attack of 500 Englishmen on a supply train sent to relieve besieged Zutphen, and convoyed by about 3900 Spanish, Italians and Albanians. On the morning of the fight Sir Philip emerged from his tent fully armed, but, noticing that Sir William Pelham, an older man, had left off his cuisses, returned and removed his own, thus leaving his thighs unprotected. In the fight that ensued a musket ball shattered his leg-bone just above the knee. Being in great pain and no longer able to manage his horse in the fight, he retreated toward the main English camp, a mile and a half away. His friend Greville, later Lord Brooke, gives the account of the famous incident: "In which sad progress, passing along by the rest of the army, where his uncle the general was, and being thirsty with excess of bleeding, he called for drink, which was presently brought him, but as he was putting the bottle to his mouth, he saw a poor soldier carried along who had eaten his last at the same feast, ghastly, casting up his eyes at the bottle, which Sir Philip perceiving, took it from his head before he drank, and delivered it to the poor man with these words, 'Thy necessity is greater than mine.' And when he had pledged this poor soldier, he was presently carried to Arnhem." Sidney lived for two months, while the doctors did what they could for him. Count Hohenlo, once Sidney's enemy, being himself wounded, sent him his own physician,

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who pronounced Sir Philip's wound fatal and returned to the count who had better chance of recovery. "Away, villain," cried the latter, "never see my face again till thou bring better news of that man's recovery, for whose redemption many such as I were happily lost." Sidney knew he was going to die, and on October 17, summoning his friends, addressed his brother Robert: "Love my memory; cherish my friends; their faith to me may assure you they are honest. But, above all things, govern your will and your affections by the will and word of your Creator; in me beholding the end of this world with all her vanities." He then required musicians to perform at his bedside a poem he had meanwhile prepared, *La Cuisse Cassée*, and soon being unable to speak, and his friends beseeching him to give some sign of his trust in God, clasped his hands in an attitude of prayer, and in a few moments ceased to breathe.

Sidney's friend, Lord Brooke, was killed with an axe by an old servant who had found he was omitted from his master's will, and who immediately after killed himself in remorse.

In the Munster insurrection of 1598, the Irish attacked, plundered and burned Spenser's Castle. He and his wife escaped, but there arose a report that a new-born baby perished in the flames. Broken-hearted and impoverished, Spenser reached London, and died in three months.

Southwell, after being imprisoned three years and racked ten times, was tried by his own wish, confessed to being a Romish priest, which was then high treason, and so suffered the fate of traitors, being hanged, drawn and quartered.

Raleigh was beheaded on October 29, 1618, in his sixtieth year. "On the scaffold, his behavior was firm and calm; after addressing the people in justification of his character and conduct, he took up the axe, and observed to the sheriff, 'This is a sharp medicine, but a sound cure for all diseases.' Having tried how the block fitted his head, he told the executioner that he would give the signal by lifting up his hand; 'and then,' added he, 'fear not, but strike home!' He then laid himself down, but was requested by the executioner to alter the position of his head. 'So the heart be

right,' was his reply, 'it is no matter which way the head lies.' On the signal being given, the executioner failed to act with promptitude, which caused Raleigh to exclaim: 'Why dost thou not strike? Strike, man!' By two strokes, received without shrinking, the head of this fearless and noble Englishman was severed from his body."

Lodge and Fletcher died of the plague in 1625.

Greene, "having, at a supper where Nash was a guest, indulged to excess in pickled herrings and Rhenish wine, . . . contracted a mortal illness, under which he continued for a month, supported by a poor, charitable cordwainer; and he was buried the day after his death in the New Church-yard near Bedlam, the cost of his funeral being 4s 4d." His "corpse was decked by the cordwainer's wife with 'a garland of bays, pursuant to his last request!'"

Until quite recently the accredited version of Marlowe's death was the following, or some slight variation upon it: "It so fell out that in London Streets as he purposed to stab one whome hee ought a grudge unto with a dagger, the other party perceiving so avoided the stroke that withall catching hold of his wrest, he stabbed his owne dagger into his owne head in such sort, that notwithstanding all the means of surgerie that could be wrought, hee shortly died thereof." To this was usually appended some censorious statement or other: "for hee even cursed and blasphemed with his last gaspe, and togither with his breath an oth flew out of his mouth"; or, "Marlowe . . . a poet and a filthy playmaker." Picturesque as this story is, the facts, at last dug up and fitted together by Hotson, seem to be these: On the evening of May 30, 1593, Ingraham Frizer killed Christopher Marlowe not on the street but in a tavern, the point of dispute being not a "lewd love," as usually accredited, but the more prosaic one of settling the dinner check. Marlowe attacked Frizer from behind, wounding him twice in the head and Frizer turned and stabbed him in self-defence. Marlowe died instantly with no time for an "oth" to fly from his mouth. There were two eye-witnesses to the event, Robert Poley and Nicholas Skere, and on their testimony Frizer was pardoned.

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Shakespeare died on the day following a visit to him by Ben Jonson and Drayton, there being a local rumor that they drank together to excess.

Ben Jonson, dying slowly in bed, suffered great pain with every move, though he insisted on trying to write and did compose fragments of a pastoral. He was visited by the King in person.

It was the fashion in the sixteenth century to make a theatrical ritual of dying, as Sidney did. Donne, dying on March 31, 1631, carried this practice over into a more realistic and cynical age, while raising the histrionic tradition to a decadent excess of elaborateness, the whole performance lasting about two months. By the end of January Donne was convinced that he was going to die. His first gesture was to have a large number of seals cut in bloodstones—then called heliotropes—depicting Christ crucified on an anchor, the whole set in gold. These he had distributed among his wide acquaintance as memorials of his affection, to be used as seals or rings, the numerous recipients including Wotton, Hall, Herbert, King and Isaak Walton. Donne next made minute preparations for a monument of him to be placed in St. Paul's, where he had been Dean for ten years. He first ordered an urn to be carved in wood, dictating the exact dimensions. This being done, he sent for an artist, had charcoal fires lighted in his study and shut out all other light, stripped himself, had his winding sheet brought, wrapped around him and tied in a great knot over his head, with his hands and feet arranged as in a coffin and the sheet open to show his macabre face, already cadaverously pale and shrunken. Thus arrayed, and feeble as he was, he stood silent on the wooden urn while the artist painted the whole arrangement, and this ghastly representation he required to be set by his bed whence, after he had repaired there, he watched it till he died. It was then given to his friend and executor, Henry King, who had Nicholas Stone carve from it the present marble monument in St. Paul's, with the epitaph written by Donne cut on the urn. This strange memorial was the only thing in St. Paul's to come intact through the great fire of 1666. But returning to Donne's

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masque of death. On March 16, the painting being finished, he took formal leave of his study, and went to bed in the Deanery, with the horrid representation beside him. Then for four days he sent for each of his most intimate friends in turn, giving to each specially prepared advice appropriate to him, and a separate blessing and prayer. These ceremonies being ended on March 20, he ordered his steward to tell his servants that if there remained anything to be done between him and them it should be prepared for the twenty-sixth, "for after that date he would not mix his thoughts with anything that concerned the world." On March 26, having completed all his earthly business, he waited for his death through five days of peaceful contemplation. In the last hour of the 31st he said faintly, "I were miserable if I might not die," then repeated many times with faint breath, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," up to the last minute of his life, then fell silent, closed his own eyes, disposed his hands and body so nothing had to be altered by those who came to shroud him, and so died.

Herbert wore himself out with saint-like zeal in his ecclesiastical duties, and died at forty. In his milder fashion he imitated the pomp of his master, Donne, in the ritual of his death, singing to his lute on his death-bed "such hymns and anthems as the angels and he now sing in heaven."

Waller at eighty-two "felt his legs grow tumid," went to Windsor and asked Sir Charles Scarborough, his friend and physician, then attending the King, "what that swelling meant." "Sir," answered Sir Charles, "your blood will no longer run." Waller repeated some line of Virgil, and went home to die.

Suckling, having, as a Royalist, fled to Paris during the civil wars, is supposed to have taken poison there. Another version of his death relates that his valet first robbed him, then put an open razor—some say a pen-knife, still others a nail—in his boot, and that Suckling, pulling it on hastily, cut an artery, wherefrom infection followed, and death.

Milton died in 1674, aged sixty-eight, of what was then called gout—"the gout struck in."

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Marvell died in 1678, in his fifty-eighth year. There was some suspicion that he was poisoned, as his popular satires were very bitter against the Catholics, and the Popish Plot followed close on his death. But the better substantiated report is that he died as the result of a stroke and the stupid treatment of “an old conceited doctor.”

Lovelace, finally released from prison, utterly impoverished, ragged, an object of charity, took consumption, and died in a cellar off an alley near Shoe Lane, aged forty.

During King James's reign, Roscommon, “forseeing that some violent concussion of the State was at hand, purposed to retire to Rome. . . . His departure was delayed by the gout; and he was so impatient either of hindrance or of pain that he submitted himself to a French empirick, who is said to have repelled the disease into his bowels,” as a result of which he died. Having led an extraordinarily licentious life, “at the moment in which he expired, he uttered, with an energy of voice that expressed the most fervent devotion,” his own lines,

My God, my Father and my Friend  
Do not forsake me in the end.

Sackville was “tossed with the King (William) in an open boat sixteen hours in very rough and cold weather on the coast of Holland.” The ensuing cold carried him off.

Sir George Etheredge “was a gay libertine, and whilst taking leave of a festive party one evening at his house in Ratisbon—where he resided as British plenipotentiary—he fell down the stairs and killed himself.”

“At the age of seventy-five, Wycherly married a young girl . . . and died eleven days afterward.”

There are four conflicting versions of Otway's death, agreeing only in that he was in desperate poverty at the time; 1.) Hunted by his creditors and their “terriers of the law, he retired to a public house on Tower-hill,” where he died of want and starvation. 2.) Having gone out on the street, starving and almost naked, he begged a shilling from a gentleman in a coffee-house, got a guinea instead, bought

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a roll, attacked it ravenously and choked to death on the first mouthful. 3.) Died of drinking water when violently heated. 4.) Pope said that he died of a fever "caught by violent pursuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends."

Dean Sprat of Westminster, Cowley's friend and biographer, stated that he died of a cold, got through staying too long with his laborors in the fields in the heat of summer. It is possible, however, that the Dean fabricated this version for Pope gave Spence this account: "His death was occasioned by a mean accident, whilst his great friend Dean Sprat was with him on a visit. They had been together to see a neighbor of Cowley's who, according to the fashion of those times, made them too welcome. They did not set out for their walk home until it was too late, and had drunk so deep that they lay out in the fields all night. This gave Cowley the fever that carried him off. The parish still talk of the drunken dean." Cowley died on July 28, 1667, in his fiftieth year.

Dryden died at seventy, May 1, 1700, of "a mortification in his leg," having been crippled in his limbs for some time before.

Addison, dying of dropsy, summoned to his bedside his stepson, the young Earl of Warwick, a youth of loose life and opinions whom Addison, though the youth had much respect for him, had vainly endeavored to persuade to mend his ways. He now tried one last experiment. When the young man had come to his bedside and "desired, with great tenderness, to hear his last injunctions," Addison told him, "I have sent for you that you may see how a Christian can die." Whatever the details of the scene that followed, it is certain that the young earl soon followed his stepfather in death.

The loose and lovable bastard, Edmund Smith, proposed, in 1710, to write a tragedy on the story of Lady Jane Gray. In order that he might pursue this work without interruption, Mr. George Ducket, in June of that year, invited him to his house at Gartham in Wiltshire. "Here he found such opportunity of indulgence as did much forward his studies, and particularly some strong ale, too delicious to be resisted. He eat and drank till he found himself plethorick: and then, resolving to ease himself by evacuation, he wrote to an

apothecary in the neighborhood a prescription of a purge so forcible, that the apothecary thought it his duty to delay it till he had given notice of its danger. Smith, not pleased with the contradiction of a shopman, and boastful of his own knowledge, treated the notice with rude contempt, and swallowed his own medicine, which, in July, 1710, brought him to his grave."

Swift, having been imbecilic for five years, "expired without a struggle," October 19, 1745, aged seventy-eight.

The death of Pope was attributed by his friends to "a silver saucepan in which it was his delight to eat potted lampreys." On his deathbed he was full of the tenderest affection for his friends and faith in the immortality of the soul. Although he had not communicated with his parents' church since childhood, at some one's suggestion he had a priest and received the last sacrament. Warburton and Bollingbroke, whom he had struggled to reconcile, sat by his deathbed, and were shortly in a quarrel over his grave.

Henry Carey committed suicide in starvation.

As a result of the discountenance of the court, Gay sank into melancholy, till "a sudden attack of inflammatory fever hurried him out of this life in three days," as Arbuthnot said, "with more precipitancy than he had ever known."

Savage, in Newgate prison for debt, received a letter from his benefactor, Pope, charging ingratitude. He fell into a languor and stayed in his room in the prison, suffering from pain in his back and side, and a fever, both of which increased through several days, though he could not afford a doctor. He was a great favorite with the other prisoners and with the keeper, and seeing the latter by his bed, he said, "I have something to say to you, Sir," paused, moved his hand, and said, "Tis gone." The following morning the keeper found him dead in his bed and buried him at his own expense in St. Peter's Churchyard.

In August, 1748, Thomson walked from London to Hammersmith, hired a boat in which he was rowed to his home at Kew, caught cold on the river, took no care of himself, and died quickly.

Gray, being seventy-one, died of gout reaching the stom-

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ach, death having been presaged by months of the deepest melancholy.

Smart, released from the madhouse, was shortly committed to the King's Bench Prison for debt, and died there. Shenstone died of a "putrid fever."

In March, 1774, Goldsmith "was attacked by a painful complaint (strangury) caused by close study, which was succeeded by a nervous fever. Contrary to the advice of his apothecary, he persisted in the use of James' powders, a medicine to which he had often had recourse"; and gradually got worse. "His last words were melancholy. 'Your pulse,' said his physician, 'is in greater disorder than it should be from the degree of fever which you have: is your mind at ease?' 'No, it is not,' was the sad reply. . . . He expired in convulsions on the morning of the 4th of April."

William Pattison died, either of starvation or of suicide, in his twentieth year. The record of him closes with the following letter: "Sir,—If you was ever touched with a sense of humanity, consider my condition: what *I am*, my proposals will inform you; what *I have been*, Sidney College, in Cambridge, can witness; but what *I shall be* some few hours hence, I tremble to think! Spare my blushes!—I have not enjoyed the common necessities of life for these two days, and can hardly hold to subscribe myself,      Yours, &c."

Churchill, aged thirty-three, went to France to visit his banished friend, Wilkes, took fever at Boulogne and died.

Lloyd, Churchill's devoted friend and debtor, had been notified of the latter's dangerous illness in France. But, according to Southey, "when the news of his death was somewhat abruptly announced to him, as he was sitting at dinner, he was seized with a sudden sickness, and saying: 'I shall follow poor Charles,' took to his bed, from which he never rose again; dying, if ever man died, of a broken heart."

In 1769 Falconer, then thirty-seven, went to sea again, this time as purser of the frigate *Aurora*, bound for India. She passed the Cape of Good Hope and some time there-

after foundered with all on board and without trace, probably in the Mozambique Channel.

There is some report that Chatterton was preoccupied with suicide from his earliest childhood. On August 24, 1770, his landlady, a Mrs. Angel, sack-maker, No. 4 Brook Street, Holborn, aware of his desperate condition, offered him a good dinner which he proudly refused. The following morning he failed to respond to a knock on the door of the garret where he lived. The door was broken down, the room was found strewn with bits of paper, fragments of Chatterton's manuscripts and letters which he had carefully destroyed, and himself dead, having taken arsenic, aged seventeen years, nine months and a few days.

After Mary Unwin died, Cowper survived three years in an imbecilic state, having occasional lucid intervals in which he wrote bad Latin or English verse. He died in 1800, aged sixty-nine.

After the loss of his once great properties, Freneau became a drunkard. On the evening of December 17, 1832, being then eighty years old, he started home from his favorite tavern in a snowstorm, and the following morning was found dying of exposure a few feet from the path to the poor farmhouse where he was living.

Three days before Blake's death he was working on the *Ancient of Days*. "He sat bolstered up in bed, and tinted it with his choicest colours, and in his happiest style. He touched and retouched it—held it at arm's length, and then threw it from him, exclaiming: 'There! That will do! I cannot mend it.' He saw his wife in tears . . . 'Stay, Kate!' cried Blake; 'Keep just as you are—I will draw your portrait—for you have ever been an angel to me.'" And so he did—and it was his last work.

Burns died in 1796, in his thirty-eighth year, at Dumfries, where he had lived for the past five years. He was a member of a raw local military organization, the Volunteers, and his funeral was a series of solemn ineptitudes. As one of his co-militarists stood by his deathbed, Burns said to him: "John, don't let the awkward squad fire over me." But a few days after the interment the Volunteers justified the premonitions

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of their dead comrade by firing three straggling volleys over the grave.

Up till March 12, 1850, Wordsworth "continued in good health, but on that day he took a cold, which developed into an inflammation of the pleura and of the bronchial tubes. By the twentieth his illness was recognized as serious. On Sunday, April 7, his eightieth birthday, prayers were offered for him in Rydal Chapel. On . . . April 20, he received communion at the hands of his son John. His . . . nephew . . . records: 'On or about this day, Mrs. Wordsworth—with a view of letting him know . . . the opinion of the medical advisers . . . said gently to him, "William, you are going to Dora" (their beloved daughter who had died three years before). He made no reply at the time, and the words seemed to have passed unheeded; indeed it was not certain that they had ever been heard. More than twenty-four hours later one of his nieces came into the room, and was drawing aside the curtains of the chamber, and then, as if awakening from a quiet sleep, he said, "Is that Dora?"' While the clock was striking the hour of noon, on Tuesday, April 23, 1850, he passed calmly away."

Scott suffered a stroke in 1830, a second in 1831 and a third in 1832, being then in London. The last left him absolutely helpless and unconscious. He was carried to his home, Abbotsford, and lingered for some time in delirium, living over the active part of his life, now presiding as a judge in the Scottish court, now preparing for the reception of the Duke of Wellington at Abbotsford. But, curiously, his mind never wandered to his literary career, nor showed any record of his phenomenal successes. Lockhart, that infamous editor who had already done his best to destroy, successively, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Keats, was presently to sneer the young Tennyson into silence, and later to snarl at Francis Thompson, thus tenderly describes Scott's end: "About half-past one, P. M., on the 21st of September, 1832, Sir Walter breathed his last, in the presence of all his children. It was a beautiful day—so warm that every window was wide open—and so perfectly still that the sound of all others most delicious to his ear, the gentle ripple of

the Tweed over its pebbles, was distinctly audible as we knelt around the bed, and his eldest son kissed and closed *his* eyes."

Coleridge, the evening before he died, "repeated a certain part of his religious philosophy, which he was specially anxious to have accurately recorded." He died in the house of Mr. Gilman, surgeon, Highgate, where he had resided for nineteen years.

Tannahill "had prepared a new edition of his poems for the press, and sent the manuscript to Mr. Constable the publisher; but it was returned by that gentleman, in consequence of his having more new works on hand than he could undertake that season. This disappointment preyed on the spirits of the sensitive poet, and his melancholy became deep and habitual. He burned all his manuscripts and sank into a state of mental derangement. Returning from a visit to Glasgow on the 17th of May, 1810, the unhappy poet retired to rest; but 'suspicion having been excited, in about an hour afterwards it was discovered that he had stolen out unperceived. Search was made in every direction, and by the dawn of the morning, the coat of the poet was discovered lying at the side of a tunnel of a neighboring brook,' " and later the body was found below.

In 1834 Lamb, aged fifty-nine, walking in Enfield, on the London Road, "stumbled against a stone, fell, and slightly injured his face. . . . Erysipelas of the face came on, and proved fatal" a few weeks later.

Barlow, accredited as minister to Napoleon and following him in the retreat from Russia, succumbed to the hardships involved and died of a fever and inflammation of the lungs in a village near Cracow, in Poland.

Woodworth, having left the "scenes of his childhood" for New York, longed for his home so passionately that after some years he fell into a nostalgic decline, and died at fifty-seven.

In his thirty-sixth year Byron went to Greece to fight in the cause of Greek liberty. Before sailing from Genoa, he said to Lady Blessington, "I shall never return from Greece," and later he said to his friend Tita, "No Tita, I

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shall never go back from Greece . . . either the Turks, or the Greeks, or the climate, will prevent that." From the time he reached Missolonghi, all the pettiness of Byron vanished and all of his gestures were noble and selfless. Missolonghi was a pest hole. Byron lived on the edge of a filthy swamp. The weather was dangerous, the sirocco blowing always, the rain usually pouring down. Byron got out little for his necessary exercise. He kept dosing himself with medicines which had already permanently impaired his health. On April 9, 1824, he rode horseback in a down-pour, got soaked and that night had fever and headache. The same evening he received diplomatic news that liberated him to proceed into action. His fever and delirium increased. On April 13 he tried to leave, but was prevented by specially violent rain and sirocco. He went to bed delirious and never got up. There was great incompetence and confusion of tongues around him. He refused to be bled, saying, "Come, you are a damned set of butchers," but consented when told it was necessary for his mind. On April 17 he was bled twice and fainted each time. On the 18th he was better and did a little translating, but soon lapsed into delirium and his English and Italian friends and servants stood about his bed weeping. At the end of the day he said, "I must sleep now." At 6 P.M. on the 19th he opened his eyes once, closed them, and was presently dead.

In his eighty-fourth year Bryant made an address in Central Park at the dedication of a statue to Mazzini, standing in the hot sun with his head uncovered. Soon after he grew dizzy, fell in climbing a flight of steps, suffered concussion of the brain and died, June 12, 1878.

Shelley had often prophesied his death by water. During June, 1822, Mary Godwin Shelley had heavy forebodings of disaster, and Shelley himself saw visions, one of the recently dead Allegra, Byron's little girl, rising from the sea and clapping her hands to greet him. On July 8 Shelley and his friend Williams set out in their little schooner the *Ariel* from Leghorn, intending to return to their house and wives at San Terenzo. Soon after they started their boat was obscured from land by a weird, yellowish mist, and shortly

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after a sudden and violent storm descended on the Mediterranean. The bodies of Shelley and Williams were found on the beach ten days later, along with the dinghy and bits of wreckage from the *Ariel*. Shelley had in his pocket Keats's last volume—*Lamia, Isabella*, etc.—which Hunt, recently arrived in Pisa, had loaned him, the board covers of the book being doubled back as if thrust hurriedly in his pocket—he also had with him a Sophocles, found later in the boat, which went to the Bodleian Library. The *Ariel*, when salvaged, was found to have had the bowsprit and both masts carried away, the gunwale stove in and to have sunk without capsizing, obviously the result of a collision. In 1863 an Italian sailor, dying at Spezzia, said that the little ship had been intentionally run down, Shelley being unpopular with the natives, but there was no other evidence to support the view that the collision was anything but an accident. The bodies of Shelley and Williams were temporarily buried in quick lime on the beach, the government of Pisa, on account of the quarantine laws, refusing to allow them to be transported to the English cemetery at Leghorn. Almost a month later, on August 16, the bones were exhumed and burned on the beach, in the presence of the two families, and Trelawney, Hunt and Byron. The Keats volume was burned in the same fire. Hunt remained in Byron's carriage. Byron plunged in the ocean and swam alone about two miles out to sea. Trelawney stood beside the flames and later told the world that he had snatched Shelley's heart from the flames, creating a romantic legend of the highest improbability, as the bodies had been in quick lime for almost a month before they were exhumed. Shelley's ashes were placed in a velvet-covered walnut box and carried to Pisa, and later sent by Trelawney to the British Consul in Rome, with a request to hold them until he arrived. The Consul was also informed of Shelley's wish to be buried in the same grave with his son William in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. Not hearing from Trelawney, the Consul after a month grew restless of his charge and tried to locate the grave of little William, which was somewhere in the Old Cemetery, but had been erroneously marked and

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could not be found in the over-crowded place. So he had the box of Shelley's ashes put in a coffin and buried by themselves in the New Protestant Cemetery, adjoining the old, under the auspices of two English clergymen who knew little or nothing of Shelley.

In writing *Adonais* Shelley assumed that Keats's consumption and death were caused by the cheap and ignorant "back-to-your-pill-boxes" review in that respected organ, the *Quarterly*; but as Byron wrote, it is not likely that John Keats, that "fiery particle," could be "snuffed out by an article." Keats's dying agonies were intensified by the two failures of his life, the failure of his love for Fanny Brawne, and his failure of literary recognition; but these failures had no causal relation to his disease, whose incipience may be traced back to 1817, long before either of them. In September, 1820, Keats left England for Italy, entering a period which he called his "posthumous life." Since the vicissitudes of his health during these five months mark one steady and unbroken decline, I have recorded them here rather than in the previous section. It was Keats's intention, on leaving England, to commit suicide with an overdose of laudanum when his sufferings should have become unendurable; but the watchfulness of Severn and Doctor Clark closed this escape to him. Keats came near to going to Italy alone, but at the last minute Haslam induced Severn, who was financially as resourceless as Keats, to accompany him. If Keats had gone alone, his agonies would probably have been shortened by suicide; but on the other hand Severn, but for the excusable conventionality that withheld the laudanum bottle, proved a heroic companion and a comfort during this ghastly period, and whatever his foibles otherwise, he deserves to hold his place in literary history as the worthy friend of one of the world's great geniuses. They sailed on September 17, 1820, on the *Maria Crowther*, and after numerous delays of bad weather, got free of the English Channel. The voyage was an unpleasant and crowded one, five passengers sleeping in a cabin. In the cabin with Keats and Severn was a Miss Cotterell, another consumptive, who supplies a grim anecdote, which Severn reports: "The lady pas-

senger though in the same state as Keats—yet differing in constitution required almost everything the opposite of him—for instance if the cabin windows were not open she would faint and remain entirely insensible for 5 or 6 hours together—if the windows were open poor Keats would be taken with a cough (a violent one—caught from this cause) and sometimes spitting blood.” They docked in Naples on October 21 and were held ten hellish days in quarantine. “We are just released from the loathesome misery of quarantine—foul weather and foul air for the whole 10 days kept us to the small cabin—surrounded by about 2000 ships in a wretched hole not sufficient for half that number, yet Keats is still living—may I not have hopes of him? He has passed what I must have thought would kill myself.” Henceforth, as for many months preceding, Keats’s great collateral torture was his frustrated love for Fanny Brawne, to whom he never wrote after leaving England. In each of his attacks she wholly occupied his mind, but he dared not open her letters which accumulated in Severn’s hands. After something over a week in Naples they proceeded on the nine days’ trip to Rome—the *vettura* going so slowly that Severn walked beside it most of the way, keeping it filled with flowers—and so reached Keats’s final lodging in the right-hand house at the bottom of the steps leading from the Piazza di Spagna to the Trinità dei Monti. Doctor Clark lived just across the square and had taken these rooms for them in order that he might at all times be near Keats. At first Doctor Clark entertained some hope of Keats’s recovery and prescribed that he ride horseback daily, which he did “at a snail’s pace,” besides taking walks with a Lieutenant Elton. Keats and Severn had their meals sent into their quarters from a *trattoria* whose patron apparently took them for tourists and so fair game, especially as they spoke no Italian, and consistently sent them abominable food. “Expostulations produced no effect, but one day, when the dinner sent in was even worse than usual, Keats emptied the dishes one by one out of the window in full view of the man who had brought it, ending by pointing to the basket as a hint to the porter to take it away. From that moment Keats and Severn had

nothing more to complain of on the score of food." These events mark Keats's last flutter of health. On December 10 he had a severe hemorrhage, and from this time his emissions of blood were measured in cupfuls, not to mention the copious bleedings which Doctor Clark administered according to the ancient practice. Severn, writing to Brown, describes the attack of December 10: "I had seen him wake on the morning of this attack, and to all appearances he was going on merrily and had unusually good spirits—when in an instant a Cough seized him and he vomited near two Cup-fuls of blood.—In a moment I got Dr. Clarke, who saw the manner of it, and immediately took away about 8 ounces of blood from the Arm—it was black and thick in the extreme. Keats was much alarmed and dejected—O what an awful day I had with him!—he rush'd out of bed and said 'this day shall be my last'—and but for me most certainly it would. At the risk of losing his confidence I took every destroying means from his reach, nor let him be from my sight one minute. The blood broke forth again in like quantity the next morning—and the doctor thought it expedient to take away the like quantity of blood—This was in the same dismal state, and must have been from the horrible state of despair he was in—but I was so fortunate as to talk him into a little calmness, and with some English newspapers he became quite patient under the necessary arrangements. This is the 9th day, and no change for the better—five times the blood has come up in large quantities generally in the morning . . . but this is the lesser evil when compared to his Stomach—not a single thing will digest—the torture he suffers all and every night—and best part of the day—is dreadful in the extreme—the distended stomach keeps him in perpetual hunger or craving—and this is augmented by the little nourishment he takes to keep down the blood—Then his mind is worse than all—despair in every shape—his imagination and memory present every image of horror so strong that morning and night I tremble for his Intellect. The recollection of England—of his 'good friend Brown'—and his happy few weeks in Mrs. Brawne's care—his sister and brother—O he will mourn over every

circumstance to me whilst I cool his burning forehead—until I tremble through every vein in concealing my tears from his staring glassy eyes.—How he can be Keats again from all this I have little hope. . . .” The doctor reduced his diet so that at one time during this final period his daily allowance was one anchovy and a small piece of toast. Here is the doctor’s own opinion of the case, in a letter to a friend: “In my last I said a few words about poor Keats. Since that day he has had another attack of bleeding from the lungs which has weakened him greatly, and he is now in a most deplorable state—his stomach is ruined and the state of his mind is the worst possible for one in his condition, and will undoubtedly hurry on an event that I fear is not far distant and even in the best frame of mind would not probably be long protracted. . . . I fear he has long been governed by his imagination and feelings and now has little power and less inclination to keep them under. . . .” Miraculously Keats’s ordeal, and Severn’s, was protracted over two months after these reports, with no significant change except Keats’s sometimes achieving a calm reconciliation to his coming death. But Severn’s difficulties multiplied. “The landlady of the apartment . . . had notified the police that a man with consumption was dying in her house. Long before the English doctors had found out that tuberculosis was a contagious disease, the Italians were convinced of the fact, and by their law everything in the room occupied by a tuberculous patient, even to the very wall-paper, must, after his death, be burnt. Now both Severn and Doctor Clark thought it would cheer Keats up to move him from his bed-room to the sofa in the sitting-room for a few hours. In the sitting-room were his and Severn’s few books, the hired piano, Severn’s painting materials, in short everything of value which the friends possessed. All these things would be destroyed if it came to the knowledge of the police that Keats had been carried into the room. The landlady’s private quarters being on the same floor made discovery a hard thing to evade, but somehow Severn managed it, even going so far as to sweep Keats’ bed-room in order to avoid calling the maid, and going without his dinner that Keats might think him dining

when he was really sweeping." Then there were the most inhumane financial complications—specifically the dishonoring of a draft on a letter of credit when they were otherwise penniless—which harassed Severn, but since he managed to keep these matters from Keats they have no personal relation to the latter. On January 15 Severn wrote Haslam an excruciating report of all these things—"but above all, this noble fellow, lying in bed, is dying in horror,—no kind hope smoothing down his suffering, no philosophy—no religion to support him—yet with all the most gnawing desire for it . . . he says in words that tear my very heart-strings—"Miserable wretch I am,—this last cheap comfort, which every rogue and fool has, is deny'd me in my last moments—yet why is this? O, I have served every one with my utmost good yet why is this—I can't understand this—and then his chattering teeth—if I do break down it will be under this. . . ." Again on January 25, Severn writes to Taylor: ". . . he cannot bear any books—the fact is he cannot bear anything—his state is so irritable—is so every way unfortunate—that I begin to sink under the very seeing him—without the labour—without the want of rest and occupation I shall be ill from this cause alone.—The hardest point between us is that cursed unused bottle of Opium—he had determined on taking this the instant his recovery should stop . . . and but for me—he would have swallowed this draught 3 months since in the ship—he says three wretched months I have kept him alive—and for it—no name—no treatment—no privations can be too bad for me. I cannot reason him out of this even on his own grounds but now I fall into his views on every point . . . I even say he should have this bottle—but I have given it to Doctor Clarke—the fact is I dare not trust myself with it—so anxious I was to satisfy him in everything. . . ." "At times Keats would not even attempt to eat. Once Severn made him a cup of coffee, but he threw it away; this was repeated a second time, with the same result. On Severn's appearing a third time with still more coffee, Keats was ashamed and deeply affected. . . . Severn, who sat up night after night, sometimes fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. Fearing that some night the

candle might burn out while he slept and Keats wake in darkness, he one evening tried the experiment of fastening a thread from the bottom of one candle to the wick of another. Keats awoke just as the first candle was guttering out, and while he waited, not liking to call Severn, the thread ignited and successfully bore the flame to the second candle, at which Keats suddenly cried out, 'Severn, Severn! here's a little fairy lamplighter actually lit up another candle.' . . . At last Severn became so worn out for want of sleep that an English nurse was engaged to come in for two hours every day. Keats liked her, and this slight relief enabled Severn to keep up till the end." On February 14 Severn wrote that Keats's mind was now calm, through increasing weakness, and on this evening he made his request to Severn that on his grave should be written, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." About this time also arrived one of Fanny Brawne's letters which Severn mistakenly gave to him, supposing it to be from Mrs. Brawne. "The glance of that letter tore him to pieces. The effects were on him for many days—he did not read it—he could not. . . ." "As the weakness increased, Keats . . . would lie for hours holding in his hand an oval white carnelian which Fanny Brawne had given him. . . . Occasionally, during these last days, he would beg Severn to go and look at the place in the English cemetery where he was to be buried, and seemed to find comfort in being told just where it was, near the Pyramid of Caius Cestius, with violets overflowing; he loved violets. In these last days, too, he ordered Severn to put Fanny Brawne's letters, and others which might come from her after his death, "inside his winding-sheet on his heart." Severn thus recounted the end to Taylor: "Four days previous to his death—the change in him was so great that I passed each moment in dread . . . he was calm and firm at its approaches—to a most astonishing degree—he told me not to tremble for he did not think that he should be convulsed—he said—'did you ever see any one die'—no—'well then I pity you poor Severn—What trouble and danger you have got into for me—now you must be firm for it will not last long—I shall soon be laid in the quiet grave. . . . O for the

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quiet—it will be my first'—when the morning light came and found him still alive—O how bitterly he grieved—I cannot bear his cries—Each day he would look up in the doctor's face to discover how long he should live—he would say—'How long will this posthumous life of mine last?'—that look was more than we could ever bear—the extreme brightness of his eyes with his poor pallid face—were not earthly." "On the 23d, Friday, at half-past four, the approach of death came on. 'Severn—I—lift me up, for I am dying. I shall die easy. Don't be frightened! Thank God it has come.' I lifted him up in my arms and the phlegm seemed boiling in his throat. This increased until eleven at night, when he gradually sank into death, so quiet, that I still thought he slept." (The last in an unsent letter to Brown.) Miss Lowell's account continues: "The next day, casts were taken of his face, hand, and foot, and on Sunday Doctor Clark, Doctor Luby, and an Italian physician, performed an autopsy. The lungs were entirely gone, the doctors could not understand how he had lived the last two months. . . . On Monday, a little funeral procession wound between the graves in the Protestant Cemetery. Severn, Doctor Clark, Doctor Luby, and four more. Doctor Wolff read the funeral service. At its close, Doctor Clark made the men put tufts of daisies on the grave, saying, 'This would be poor Keats' wish, could he know it.' "

On the night of July 17, 1848, Beddoes, melancholy and alone in Basle, took a room in the Cicogne Hotel, and early the next morning opened with his razor an artery in his leg. He was taken to the hospital where the wound did not heal well—due, according to a legend, to Beddoes's secretly pulling off the bandages, and about a month later gangrene set in. The leg was amputated in October, and the operation was apparently successful. In January, 1849, however, complications set in, with great pain in the stump, fever and delirium. He wrote farewell letters and died of apoplexy on January 26, being found unconscious with one of these letters on his bosom.

The evening before Emerson died, being seventy-nine, his son read to him *Paul Revere's Ride*, and afterwards

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Emerson as usual separated "the brands in the fireplace and swept the hearth for the night."

During September, 1849, Poe, then forty years old, was in Richmond, where he became engaged to Mrs. Shelton, formerly Sarah Elmira, a boyhood sweetheart of his. At the end of the month he left for New York, purposing to close up his affairs there before returning to Richmond to marry. Mrs. Susan T. Weiss, in *Scribner's Magazine*, 1878, described his last evening in Richmond, which he "spent at my mother's. He declined to enter the parlors, where a number of visitors were assembled, saying he preferred the more quiet sitting-room; and here I had a long and almost uninterrupted conversation with him. He spoke of his future, seeming to anticipate it with an eager delight, like that of a youth. He declared that the last few weeks in the society of his old and new friends had been the happiest that he had known for many years, and that when he again left New York he should leave there behind all the trouble and vexation of his past life. . . . He was the last of the party to leave the house. We were standing on the portico, and after going a few steps he paused, turned, and again lifted his hat, in a last adieu. At the moment, a brilliant meteor appeared in the sky directly over his head, and vanished in the east. We commented laughingly upon the incident; but I remembered it sadly afterward. . . . That night he spent at Duncan's lodge; and as his friend said, sat late at his window, meditatively smoking, and seeming disinclined for conversation. On the following morning he went into the city, accompanied by his friends Doctor Gibbon Carter and Doctor Mackenzie. The day was passed with them and other intimate friends. Late in the evening he entered the office of Doctor John Carter, and spent an hour in looking over the day's papers; then taking Doctor Carter's cane he went out, remarking that he would step across to Saddler's (a fashionable restaurant) and get supper. From the circumstance of his taking the cane, leaving his own in its place, it is probable that he had intended to return; but at the restaurant he met with some acquaintances who detained him until late, and then accompanied him to the Baltimore boat. Accord-

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ing to their account he was quite sober and cheerful to the last. . . ." Poe indeed should have been sober, for he had been warned that further alcoholic indulgence might carry him off at any time. The next week is unaccounted for, but, in Mr. Untermeyer's account, "on October 3, a compositor of the Baltimore *Sun*, drinking at a Lombard Street tavern (in Baltimore), recognized the poet, though 'his face was haggard and unwashed, his hair unkempt, and his whole physique repulsive.' Helpless and delirious, he was taken to the Washington College Hospital. Four days later, talking to specters 'that withered and loomed on the walls,' he died," October 7, 1849. Poe had arrived in Baltimore during an election, and it has been conjectured that this last fatal spree resulted from his having been plied with liquor by political rough-necks and dragged as a "repeater" from poll to poll. Or again it is possible, in Mr. Untermeyer's words, "that he had suffered another 'lapse,' in spite of promises and the doctor's warning. . . ." It is inferrable, from Mrs. Weiss's guarded phraseology, that she was at least suspicious of the acquaintances who "detained him until late" at Saddler's Restaurant and took him to the Baltimore boat. Poe was buried in Baltimore.

Tennyson had always hated the newspapers that continually pestered and misrepresented him. When, in his eighty-fourth year, he knew that he was dying, he exclaimed, "O that press will get hold of me now!" He passed away in simple grandeur, lying heroic and marble-like in his bedroom at Aldworth, with a strong moon flooding him, one hand holding that of his son's wife, the other his favorite copy of Shakespeare, which he had demanded for the occasion.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning died at sixty in Florence, of a bronchial attack, expiring in her husband's arms, her head against his cheek. She was buried in the English cemetery, in Florence.

Browning died of a cold, in his son's palazzo in Venice, in his seventy-eighth year.

Emily Brontë caught a cold at her brother Bramwell's funeral and never recovered. She refused to admit her

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weakness, to see a doctor, to take any medicine, or to desist from her regular routine of domestic work. On December 14 (1848) she tried to feed the dogs as usual and collapsed. The next morning she got up with difficulty and dressed and combed her hair sitting before the fire. The comb fell in the fire and she was too weak to reclaim it. At last she got downstairs, attempted a little work, collapsed, and died trying to stand up. She was twenty-nine.

In 1890 the Harleigh Cemetery of Camden offered Whitman, then seventy-one, a free plot, and he picked out a pretty one in the woods on a little eminence. He immediately contracted with a monument firm to build him a \$2500 tomb on the spot, and the workmen in their impersonal way cut the then date, 1890, on the cornerstone. Thereafter Whitman visited his future residence regularly, accustoming himself to it by sitting in it, and usually taking his visitors there to talk. In December, 1891, he took pneumonia, and though pleurisy, tuberculosis and other complications set in, he held on for three months, with trained nurses and the best medical attention. During the previous year he had brought out a little book to say farewell to his muse, and he now ordered a new edition of *Leaves of Grass* to include this. At his wish a few copies were rushed through the press and bound in time for him to distribute them personally to his friends. This ritual being accomplished, he died on March 26, 1892; and the date on the cornerstone was appropriately changed.

Rossetti had a stroke in 1881, in his fifty-third year. He complied with the doctor's orders that his chloral be stopped; the delusions from which he had suffered gradually disappeared and his mind was calm. But his physical stamina was gone, and though he tried to resume work, he was half blind, could only totter a few steps and was in continual pain. He died suddenly in convulsions on Easter Sunday, 1882, and was buried at Birchington where, attended by his mother, his sister and Watts-Dunton, he had been trying to recuperate.

Emily Dickinson was buried in a white coffin covered with a pall of blue sand violets. It was carried to the cemetery

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on a bier of pine boughs borne by the laborers who worked on her father's farm.

In June, 1870, "Australian" Gordon, not yet recovered from a bad fall from his horse, being pressed for money, and learning that his claim to a great Gordon estate in Scotland had been disallowed, sent to the press his volume of *Bush Ballads*, and shot himself. According to his instructions, a friend burned a whole trunkful of his manuscript verse, prose and miscellaneous writings.

Swinburne died of pneumonia in 1909, aged seventy-two.

David Gray, dying of consumption in 1861 at twenty-three, begged to see his poems in book form. A sheaf was sent hurriedly to a publisher, and one page was set, printed and shown to him the day before he died.

W. S. Gilbert, being seventy-five years old, died in May, 1911, "from heart failure 'brought on by over-exertion while saving a young lady from drowning.' "

On the evening of December 3, 1894, Stevenson, then forty-four, at his house in Samoa, wrote out a burial service for himself. The next day he "spent in writing his *Weir of Hermiston*, a day full of life and gayety," then "suddenly fainted and died a short time afterwards," surrounded by his family and a dozen or more Samoans who formed part of the little clan of which he was chief, his head supported by a rest which was the gift of Shelley's son. The Union Jack that flew over the house was hauled down and laid over the body, and the native chiefs brought mats in which they wrapped him, flag and all. He had chosen the spot where he wished to be buried, a ledge on a mountain top overlooking the ocean, and natives with knives and axes cut a steep path up to the place and dug the grave. His body-servant arranged his hands and interlocked his fingers in the attitude of prayer, and Samoans carried the coffin on their shoulders up to the grave, where his own burial service was read. Subsequently a large tomb of Samoan design was built over the place out of great blocks of cement. On one side of the tomb is a bronze plate bearing in Samoan Ruth's speech to Naomi, Ruth 1:16, and on the other side another plate with Stevenson's own *Requiem*, in English.

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Francis Thompson died in 1908, in his forty-ninth year. It had been supposed that he was dying of laudanum poisoning; but laudanum had undoubtedly prolonged his life, for it was found that he died in fact of consumption, one lung being entirely consumed and the other badly infected.

At thirty-five, Lionel Johnson "had a fall in Fleet Street which broke his skull," and so died.

When Wilde was dying he called for champagne and said that he was "dying beyond his means."



*PART IV*  
THE POET AGAINST THE WORLD



## THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

Robinson used to say that he never advised any young man to write poetry unless he was willing to starve for it—which amounted to a reassertion of the truism that the public sale of poetry has rarely kept any one above starvation level. Another contemporary has said that poets and other artists have no call to complain of their hardships, for they of all persons are spending their lives as they want to. This goes beyond the fact and verges into an ignorant and cruel assumption that there is some incompatibility between spiritual and physical nourishment, some necessary connection between spiritual independence and hardship. It is irritating enough to find this assumption among laymen. It is absurd and pathetic to find poor poets themselves guilty of a rationalization to the effect that there is actually some *virtue* in their poverty, that somehow or other they are better poets for it. A period of hardship and struggle in youth is no doubt helpful in maturing the poet as it is in maturing any man. But when a poet comes to set on paper the results of this maturing process he had best do it on a full belly. Poverty is no more an asset in the practice of poetry than it is in the practice of medicine. Hunger and worry have strangled far more literature than they have engendered. The greatest poets have enjoyed at least the fundamental comforts at the time of their best output and, with one exception, during most of their lives.

Poverty is no asset to the poet. No more is wealth that demands his attention. A little endowed comfort may be ideal for the poet, but opulence is an obstacle almost as serious as poverty to his healthy growth. A youth raised amid riches, while he will be prone to an idealism usually more lofty than that of his less fortunate brother, will find it difficult to envisage and pursue that idealism otherwise than in thin air. He will, due to his circumstances, and without fault of his own, grow up with little understanding of the masses of men. Witness the high and selfless philanthropy

of Shelley; but witness again the aerial quality of his poetry and his efforts to usher in Utopia. Another objection to wealth is that it is bound to be a responsibility and a burden, no matter how philanthropically it is administered. I do not think Shelley was any the greater poet for his pecuniary generosity. More important was the amount of time and energy he wasted in indulging it.

The single evil which is common to the rich and the poor poet alike is economic worry. The poor poet worries to live. The rich poet worries about something he finds gratuitously in his hands whether he likes it or not. The ideal economic state of the poet, that in which his imagination is free for its business of perceiving reality, is something apart from the condition of either of these. It is a state of economic security without responsibility, certainty of the elementary necessities and leisure to live and write, and beyond these no luxuries, no possessions, no proprietary involvement at all. This, I am sure, is what all of the great poets have wanted, and all they have wanted. They have found these conditions most satisfactorily in the possession of a small and secure independent income. But where this happy endowment has not obtained, the question arises, by what means and under what state of society have the poets most nearly approached the ideal condition of irresponsible leisure? I wish to point out some differences in the situations of the poets under the best of the Patronage System which, as an accepted system, ended with the eighteenth century, and under the best that we have so far seen of the modern Democratic System which has generally replaced it.

Under both the Patronage and the Democratic Systems commercial publication has existed as an ancillary economic resource for the poet, having appeared modernly with the Renaissance when the ability to read spread beyond the monastery and the castle. But, as already stated, it has rarely provided more than partial support for a poet. Lamb recorded unequivocally the dangers of relying on commercial publication, in his letter to Bernard Barton who, having enjoyed a little flurry of literary success, wrote his senior for advice as to the advisability of resigning his salaried posi-

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tion in a bank and trying to live by literature. "Throw yourself on the world," exclaimed Lamb, "without any rational plan of support beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you. Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's-length from them—come not within their grasp. I have known many authors want for bread—some repining, others enjoying the blessed security of a counting-house—all agreeing that they had rather have been tailors, weavers—what not?—rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some go mad, one dear friend literally dying in the workhouse. Oh, you know not—may you never know—the miseries of subsisting by authorship!" Making all allowance for Lamb's rhetoric, the fact remains that all but a very few of the poets have looked elsewhere than to commercial publication for all or most of their livelihood. The Patronage System provided a constituted class of persons to whom they might look. The Democratic System requires them to look, not to certain persons specifically charged with the duty of caring for them, but to miscellaneous and extraneous employment—what Lamb calls "tailors, weavers—what not?"

The class to whom the poets looked for support under the Patronage System was the nobility, whose members had the feudal means and the *feudal duty* to support talent and who, in spite of a few notorious examples to the contrary, did startlingly well in attending to worthy cases that came before them. The approach to these personages was by custom deferential, fatuous, and their generosity was customarily rewarded by flattering dedications, encomiastic verses, and other similar piffle. The system as such never existed in America and it is today only vestigial in England. It has been feebly survived in both countries by un-systematic and insufficient personal patronage, depending

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upon a state of friendship and too often upon real, rather than conventionalized, boot-licking.

The change came with the romantic, democratic and industrial revolutions of the end of the eighteenth century. The new morality held it unmanly to address yourself humbly to a nobleman. Your first social duty was to support yourself, either by the public sale of your works or by such other means as might be necessary. In other words, *the practice of poetry became less worthy in popular estimation than the practice of making a living. Money, not truth, became the highest aim.* Poets came to be ashamed of being supported for their talents, or otherwise than by their talents. From the encouragement, the great houses and the pensions of the nobility they turned to the drudgery, the boarding houses, the hard-earned pittances of jobs as journalists, teachers, what-not.

That all was not always rosy under the Patronage System we are assured by Doctor Johnson's famous letter to Lord Chesterfield, *à propos* the doctor's *Dictionary*:

My Lord—I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little. (Chesterfield had sent Johnson a gift of ten guineas.)

Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which

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it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my lord—Your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant.

SAM. JOHNSON.

But I submit that here, as often in his most elegant passages, Johnson was blustering contrary to all but the very exceptional fact. There are two or three flagrant cases in the record where talent languished in the days of the Patronage System. But against these there are at least two score of poets who were comfortably supported, as will appear in the tables on pages 311, 312, and 314.

The trouble is that to democratic eyes, increasingly from Doctor Johnson's time to our own, the Patronage System has seemed in some sort to involve self-abasement. But the fact is, that under the feudal attitude and until the anti-aristocratic surges at the end of the eighteenth century, there was nothing in the least humiliating about it, nothing more disgraceful than any application for a job today or an appeal to one of those remote, impersonal, and omnipotent government clerks who control the destinies of us all. In an aristocratic state the submission of your wares to a nobleman was simply the accepted way of offering them to the world. In addressing yourself to a member of the arist-

tocracy you were approaching, not so much a person as a deity, not so much an individual as the embodiment of an institution in which authority reposed. It was no more for you to inquire into an aristocrat's private character than to question the morals of God. Though a nobleman might be notoriously unprincipled, it was nevertheless the convention of the time to attribute to him the appearance and better attributes of Achilles, or Apollo, just as today it is still common practice to adore and to prostrate oneself before an old testament deity who is on record as guilty, in his various aspects, of murder, arson, sedition and adultery. The nobleman, like the god, was not a person but a symbol around which the popular imagination organized society. To associate with and to flatter *personally* some abandoned powerful scamp whom you didn't like, that indeed was sycophancy, as deplorable in the seventeenth century as it is today. But so long as you stood at a respectful distance and bombarded him with absurdly extravagant epithets, you were only putting the conventional superscription on your letter and were compromising your integrity not at all.

The fact that the dedications of most books of verse down to the romantic period assure us that some otherwise forgotten gentleman resembled the sun for bounty and the early Christians for virtue, this means no more than the record of a contract. In return for the flattery the virtuous gentleman financed the book, or otherwise provided for the author. The author belittled himself no more in the business than he would in striking terms with a publisher, and the patron's name in the dedication was no more or less significant than the name of a publishing house on the title page today. Everybody understood, most of all the patron. The aristocracy must be accorded homage and obedience and in return they must care for their people. Down to the industrial revolution the nobility, however dissolute, was still the nobility, with feudal obligations which were no more to be neglected than the rules of etiquette and dress. If you addressed yourself, with any literary recommendation at all, to a baronet, in nine cases out of ten he would either come across himself or, if he happened to be out of funds

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or favor, he would refer you to a friend who could and would take care of you.

And after these preliminary arrangements the situation of the patronized youth was far less compromising than that of the poet today. The latter must actually work at his irrelevant job. The former usually got some kind of an allowance or pension or wholly nominal job which left most of his time his own. Once he had written an acceptable letter to a stranger assuring him that he was God, he could lie back on his hillside well-fed. Maybe two or three times a year he must produce odes on his patron's birthday, or his daughter's, or that of his favorite mount. What of it? Or maybe he must even dance attendance in the earl's lobby and take a little insolence from his lackies. With a life-time of ease to be gained, what even of that? By overlooking an equal amount of insolence today on the part of office boys you might earn enough to survive a few months.

The trouble was that in Doctor Johnson's day the old system was already breaking up. The real nobles were beginning to lose their wealth and their political power to the new industrial magnates who strutted as democrats and assumed no feudal obligations. The people were beginning to look at the nobles no longer as unapproachables, but as men with faults like other men. And the nobles themselves, suffering a loss of power, had less patronage to give, and suffering a loss of worship, were less willing to embarrass themselves by giving. The old way was breaking up when Johnson and Chesterfield had their pass. A century earlier, even in the Restoration, Johnson would have been less critical of the Earl, and the Earl's servants would have been more gracious to Johnson.

In glancing thus wistfully at the Patronage System I am not forgetting the cases where it broke down. The notorious cases of Collins and Chatterton were, I think, special, and I shall notice them specially. As for the array of pathetic starvelings in Disraeli's *Calamities*, I submit that most of them were bad writers, not worth encouraging, who were better off in some other employment. These were the un-talented men of whom we can say justly that if they choose

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to do what they want, *to no benefit to society*, they must not complain if society neglects them. Everybody who believes himself a poet is not one and, imperfect as any method of selection must be, some method must be adopted. After all, the aristocracy had a limited amount of patronage to give, and they had to demand some kind of credentials. These they sought among their literary acquaintance which was usually large. Receiving a verse manuscript and an appeal, they referred it to one or more of the leading poets of the day, and acted on their recommendation. Or, even better, you might reach a nobleman's ear by first approaching such as Dryden, or Pope or Addison. Of what value is it to a young writer today that he gets the ear of an older, established writer? He may get a blurb or a preface. He may even get a publisher. Time was he might have got the means to continue to write!

The Patronage System, imperfect as it was, has offered poets generally the best chance of survival that civilization has yet devised. In its feudal phase, depending upon the existence of an hereditary aristocracy, it is gone forever. There remains the possibility of a Socialist phase, under a new state of society where democratic politics may conceivably concern itself with human desires other than those for physical power. The hope for the future, in poetry as in intellectual things generally, is that some method will be devised of producing an aristocracy, not of birth but of merit, endowed with high privileges and high duties. In so far as any contemporary movement contains this possibility, it is, from the poet's point of view, interesting. Otherwise it is only a further democratization and will further debase all intellectual coinage whatsoever.

There is no room in a volume of this kind for a thorough exposition of the circumstances in which the poets have produced their work and their best work. I shall first offer condensed outlines of the economic histories of thirty or forty of the leading British and American poets, and thereafter tables showing the economic conditions, first of a large number of poets, and second, of the twenty poets whom I selected earlier as seeming to be most certainly installed in

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immortality. Then I shall offer further tables emphasizing the particular employments in which the poets have been engaged. And finally I shall offer a few anecdotes of the poets' miscellaneous struggles for existence, or their dexterity or other display of practicality or "soundness."

*The average value of money from 1300 to 1600 was perhaps twenty times its value today.*

Chaucer (1340-1400). At seventeen, page to "Blaunce the Duchess," wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, third son of Edward III. At nineteen, in the army, captured by the French, and ransomed by the King for £16. At twenty-seven, received royal pension of twenty marks (£13) in compensation for services as a valet of the King's household. At twenty-eight, the Duke of Clarence dying, Chaucer passed under the patronage of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. 1372: Diplomatic mission to Genoa, Pisa and Florence—Granted a pitcher of wine daily, to be received from the King's butler. 1374: Appointed Comptroller of the Customs and Subsidy of Wools, Skins and Leather for the port of London—Granted further £10 pension by John of Gaunt. 1375: Received custody of certain confiscated lands, which netted him £104 in three years. 1376: Short diplomatic mission, which netted him £6, 13s, 4d—Received the fine of one John Kent, wool smuggler, amounting to £71, 4s, 6d. On the accession of Richard III, in 1377, went on two diplomatic missions for which he received £48, 13s, 4d and £30 respectively. 1378: Again on diplomatic business on the Continent. 1382: In addition to the wool subsidy, appointed Comptroller of the Petty Customs, and in 1385 accorded the valuable privilege of *performing all his customs duties by deputy*. Chaucer was now a rich man. 1386: Elected Knight of the Shire for Kent; but in the same year John of Gaunt lost power and Chaucer lost both his comptrollerships. Having established a pretentious scale of living, he had to borrow on his pensions. 1389: John of Gaunt restored to favor, and so Chaucer—Appointed Clerk of the King's Works at Westminister and at Windsor. 1390: Put in charge of repairing the Thames embankment at Woolwich, and of erecting a scaffold for the King and Queen to

view the tournament at Smithfield. Remuneration for Clerkship of Works at least two shillings a day and expenses. 1391: Lost Clerkship of the Works. 1394: Additional royal pension of £20. Independent income now £43 (worth about \$4000 today), with certain borrowings against it. 1398: Small government jobs—Also received a royal grant of a tun of wine a year. 1399: Addressed to the new King, Henry IV, *Compleynt to His Purs*, and four days thereafter his pension of twenty marks (£13) was doubled. *Wrote Canterbury Tales 1386-1400, while living on pensions with few government duties.*

Sidney (1554-1586). Though of a great family was up against it to keep up the court standard of living. Always in debt to tailors and haberdashers. Habitually persecuted Catholics and was granted their confiscated incomes. Elizabeth gave him a sinecure of £120. Died leaving many poor creditors.

Spenser (1552-1598). Poor boy. Education patronized, probably by relatives. At twenty-one, his friend Harvey introduced him to Sidney, who recommended him to his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, who housed and fed him thenceforth. At thirty-two, appointed secretary to Lord Gray, Lord Deputy to Ireland. 1586: Received 3029 confiscated acres in Cork, including Kilcolmon Castle. *Wrote "Faerie Queen" here.* It got him a £50 pension from the Queen. The Queen nominated him for Sheriff of Cork, but he was appointed instead Clerk of the Council of Munster.

The Elizabethan dramatists received just enough to survive without recourse to patronage, if they could sell two plays a year, that being the then normal rate of output. In 1600 the manager Henslowe never paid over £8 for a play, but the price rose subsequently to £25. Besides this the author usually got a share in the second day's performance. Prologues brought from 5s to £1.

Marlowe (1564-1593). Education was patronized—wrote *Tamourlaine* at Cambridge. In London was first an actor in the Curtain Theatre in Shoreditch, but "brake his leg in one rude scene, when in his early age," and thereafter lived poorly as an author. No record of patronage. *All plays but*

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*“Tamourlaine” probably written in embarrassed economic circumstances.*

Shakespeare (1564-1616). Father fell in debt and mortgaged away mother's estate. In middle twenties, horseholder at London theatres. At twenty-eight, actor and playwright. Thereafter produced about two plays a year for fifteen years. May have participated in managerial duties and rewards. At thirty, with the Chamberlain's Men, the most popular company in London, later, under James, known as the King's Men. At thirty-three, bought the “New Place,” the biggest house in Stratford village, for £60, and lived there comfortably. It is impossible that he could have done this on his returns from the theatre. *There must have been a patron*, “W. H.” of the sonnets or some other. 1602: Bought 107 adjoining acres for £320, and rented a cottage for his gardener. 1605: Paid £400 for the lease of the tithes in Stratford. 1616: Died leaving an estate worth about £250 a year.

Drayton (1563-1631). At ten was page to a “person of quality.” Education patronized by Sir Henry Goodere. Supported by Sir Walter Aston for several years, then for a long time in the household of the Countess of Bedford. Last years in the household of the Earl of Dorset.

*During the seventeenth century money was worth perhaps fifteen times its value today.*

Jonson (1573-1637). At nineteen, came under patronage of the Earl of Southampton. Joined Henslowe's strolling players. Failure as an actor, but became first a play-doctor, then (1598) a successful playwright. 1602: Commissioned to write and manage the pageant of James I's entry into London. Thenceforth, royal patronage. Appointed City Poet, salary £33. Also paid by the City to conduct banquets and entertainments, and by the court to produce masques and pageants. James gave him a pension of 200 marks (£130) and subsequently doubled it. Lived opulently. At the accession of Charles, lost his pension, and his house burned with his valuable library. Poverty and a stroke. Charles restored the pension with the addition of an annual keg of Canary, but, on Jonson's quarrelling with

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Inigo Jones, transferred the pension to another. Lost job as City Poet but this was restored. A few years before his death the Earl of Newcastle, in return for two pageants, assumed his support.

Donne (1573-1631). Wealthy background. Read law and admitted to practice at nineteen. Inherited fortune at twenty-one and squandered it slowly. *Best poetic period before twenty-eight, while financially comfortable.* At twenty-four, Secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of England. 1601: Secretly married Sir Thomas's niece and lost his job at the urgency of her father, Sir George More. Till 1608: Employed doing under-paid secretarial work for Thomas Morton, the great anti-Catholic controversialist. So poor could not accept invitations for lack of clothes. 1608: Dower settlement of £80 a year by his father-in-law—For two years thereafter court poet in the household of the Countess of Bedford, Twickenham Park. 1610: Wrote an elegy on the death of Elizabeth Drury, unknown to him—Her father, Sir Robert Drury, the richest man in England, established him and his family in Drury House. 1611: Wrote another elegy—called it “paying his rent.” 1612: On the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine, was commissioned to write a marriage song. Sought a church appointment through Somerset, the King's favorite, who attached him to his person. 1612-14: Employed by Somerset in unsavory legalistic employment of getting the marriage of the Countess of Essex annulled so that Somerset might marry her. 1614: Somerset summoned him to the King who “descended to a persuasion” that he take orders. Ordained and received rich livings. Greatest preacher in England. 1621: King appointed him Dean of St. Paul's.

Herbert (1592-1634). Small annuity from his family and from Cambridge. James gave him the £120 sinecure which had been Sidney's. At thirty-seven, got living of Bemerton, Wiltshire. *Best work thereafter.*

Crashaw (1615-1650). Fellowship at Cambridge. Ejected as royalist. To Italy and became secretary to a Cardinal, and Canon of the church at Lorretto.

Vaughn (1621-1695). Financial failure successively as lawyer and doctor.

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Milton (1608-1674). Supported by his father until thirty-two, *while doing the shorter poems.* 1640-1646: Taught a school. 1646: Father left him a small competence. 1649: Appointed Latin Secretary to the Council of State—salary £288, later halved to pay his successive assistants, Phillip Meadowes and Marvell. At Restoration lost three quarters of his small property, through mismanagement and repudiation of the securities of the Protectorate. But was still *independent in epic period.* 1667: Sold *Paradise Lost* to "Samuel Symons, printer," for £5 down, £5 more upon the sale of 1300 of the first edition of 1500, £5 more upon the sale of like number of the second edition, and so forth. Got the second £5. Left estate of £1500. Widow sold all claims to *Paradise Lost* for £8.

Marvell (1621-1678). Father died leaving him penniless in Cambridge. It is supposed that Mrs. Skinner, a wealthy widow, paid for the completion of his education and bequeathed him her estate. At twenty-nine, became tutor to the twelve-year-old daughter of Lord Fairfax. *Wrote "garden" poetry while living at Nunappleton House, the Fairfax Estate.* 1651: Became pamphleteer and *de facto* Laureate for Cromwell who patronized him. *The Ode on Cromwell's Return.* 1651: Became Milton's assistant. 1659: To Parliament where he remained until his death.

Suckling (1608-1642). Inherited an enormous fortune which he had not quite wholly squandered at his death.

Wither (1588-1667). Sold his paternal estate to raise a troop of horse for the Parliament. Major-general under Cromwell. Got much property by sequestration, lost it at the Restoration, when he was jailed. Released at seventy-five, penniless. *Wrote much of his poetry in prison.*

Lovelace (1618-1658). Spent his large fortune in the royal cause, was jailed and, after the King's execution, released a beggar. Having once been a dandy who dressed in cloth of gold or silver, he now, being "very poor in body and purse, was the object of charity, went in ragged clothes, and mostly lodged in dirty places, most befitting the worst of beggars and poorest of servants." *Did his best work in prison.* Died in a cellar off an alley near Shoe Lane.

Cowley (1618–1667). Patronized at Oxford. During the Commonwealth, employed in coding and decoding the Queen's correspondence. After the Restoration got from the Queen certain leases worth £300. Left legacies totalling £420.

Dryden (1631–1700). Inherited £60 a year. At thirty-seven, contracted to supply three plays a year to the King's players for one and one quarter share in the profits, about £300. Same year—1668—made Laureate, salary £100 and a tierce of wine. 1669: Made Historiographer, salary £100. Total salary at forty, £500. 1684: Salary as Laureate in arrears, and received an additional pension of £100. On the accession of James—1685—pension was stopped and restored in a few months. 1688—the Revolution: Lost everything as a Catholic, though Sackville as Lord Treasurer kept up the Laureate's salary from his own purse. Got £1200 for translation of Virgil, beside doing other remunerative translations. Contract with publisher Tonson for 10,000 lines for £268—*this performance included his best lyrics and fables*. Duchess of Ormond sent him £500 in recognition of the *Fables*. Also was still writing plays.

*During the eighteenth century money was worth, on the average, perhaps ten times its value today.*

Pope (1688–1744). Inherited small patrimony, early augmented by success of *Essay on Criticism* and *Rape of the Lock*. 1715–1719: Got almost £10,000 for translation of the *Iliad*. 1726: Got over £3000 net for translation of the *Odyssey*, most of the work being done for him by Fenton and Broome. Invested these sums in annuities which supported him well for life.

Young (1684–1765). In his twenties, patronage of Duke of Wharton. At forty, pension of £200 from George I. At fifty took orders and presently retired to live at Welwyn, Hertfordshire, *where he wrote the "Night Thoughts."* Got £3000 for satires, *The Universal Passion*.

Thomson (1700–1748). Came to London at twenty with a few shillings, the manuscript of *Winter*, and letters to people of quality done up in a handkerchief. The last stolen. Sold *Winter* for £3. Dedicated it to Sir Spencer

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Compton and got twenty guineas. Tutor in the house of Lord Binning, where wrote *Summer. Spring* dedicated to the Countess of Hertford who entertained him one summer. At thirty-one, sent abroad by the Lord Chancellor Talbot as companion to his son, and on return was appointed Secretary of the Briefs. On the death of Talbot—1734—lost reappointment through failure to apply to the new Lord Chancellor. Introduced to the Prince of Wales, told him his affairs “were in a more poetical posture than formerly,” and got a pension of £100. At forty-three, appointed Surveyor-General of the Leeward Islands, and was permitted to perform duties by deputy—net salary £300.

Gray (1716–1771). Educated by his uncle. Lived on his fellowship at Cambridge. Had a theory that a gentleman should not take money for his writing. Accepted £40 for *Pindaric Odes* but would take nothing for the *Elegy*. Dodsley made about £1000 by it. At fifty-two given the Chair of Modern Languages.

Collins (1721–1759). Educated by his uncle. *Wrote his later famous Odes at Cambridge*. Published when he was twenty-four. No one bought them. Became a drunkard and quit writing. At twenty-eight inherited £2000 from his uncle.

Chatterton (1752–1770). At fourteen, apprentice to an attorney. *Wrote “Rowley Poems” before going to London*. At seventeen went to London intending to support himself by hack writing. Obtained the patronage of the Lord Mayor, and did succeed in supporting himself. The Lord Mayor died, and he could no longer support himself. *Wrote “Ballad of Charity” in privation*.

Burns (1759–1796). *Wrote songs as a peasant*. 1786: First book a success. 1787: Second edition brought in £500 or £600. Leased a farm and took job as Excise Gauger—net return about £70.

Cowper (1731–1800). At twenty-three called to the bar. At thirty-two melancholy over prospects of passing examination for Clerkship of the House of Lords, suffered first attack of insanity. Thereafter supported by small subscription collected from his relatives. *Poetry all written late*.

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Crabbe (1754–1832). Served apprenticeship as physician, and practised though the work was distasteful to him. At twenty-six, went to London, determined to be a writer, possessing a box of clothes, a case of surgical instruments, £3 and a letter to a linen-draper. After two years had placed nothing, had pawned all his possessions and was beginning to starve. As wholly unknown, sent manuscripts and an appeal to Burke, who immediately installed him in his house, later saw to his ordination and settlement in comfortable livings. *Best work done after Burke took him up.*

Blake (1757–1827). Apprenticed to an engraver at fourteen. Intermittent patronage by friends, but generally poor. 1800–1803: Under patronage of poet Hayley. Thereafter, poverty and sale of engravings. *Best work done in poverty with a very little intermittent patronage.*

Wordsworth (1770–1850). Educated and lived until 1795 on small patrimony, assisted latterly by advances from friends Charles and Raisley Calvert. 1795: Got £900 legacy by death of Raisley. Invested it at 10 per cent, and lived on this, on sister Dorothy's small property and miscellaneous donations, and in borrowed houses for four years—during the same period presumably sending money to Annette Vallon. 1799: Invested last of Calvert legacy in Dove Cottage, Grasmere, but had not enough to furnish it. Assistance by friends and sailor brother John. *Wrote "Lyrical Ballads" before 1800.* 1800: Friendship with and probably assistance from rich art patron, Sir George Beaumont. 1802: Lord Lonsdale began to pay debt long owing by his father to Wordsworth's father, and generally took supervision of Wordsworth's affairs. 1813: Lord Lonsdale got him position of Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland County—duties performed by a clerk—net return about £400. His poetry began to sell. 1818: Appointed Justice of the Peace. 1827: Sir George Beaumont left him a legacy of £100 and a further settlement of £100 annually “to defray the expences of a yearly tour.” 1842: Civil list pension of £300, and resigned office of Distributor of Stamps. 1843: Appointed Laureate.

Coleridge (1772–1834). Educated by his family. There-

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after mainly supported by friends. 1796: Considered starting a school—Married, relying upon a proposition of Cottle, Bath bookseller, to pay him a guinea and a half a hundred lines for an unlimited quantity of verse—Supplied little or no verse under the arrangement—Founded the *Watchman* which lasted nine issues. 1797: Accepted loan of a house from friend, Poole. 1798: Almost became Unitarian minister, but instead got £150 allowance from Wedgwood brothers. *Best poetry written before 1800*. 1800: Lost the Wedgwood allowance through discourteous disregard of death of one of the brothers, Thomas. 1803: Friends raised a subscription to send him abroad, Wordsworth contributing £100. 1804: Settled more or less permanently with Wordsworth. 1807: De Quincey sent him £300. 1809: Founded the *Friend*, which died in a year through his inefficiency. 1810: Basil Montague took him to London. 1811–1815: Lived with friend Morgan in London. 1815: Entered house of James Gilman where he remained till his death, paying something earned by his lectures which all of London attended as a sort of charity.

Landor (1775–1864). Inherited a large fortune and wasted most of it in real estate. At sixty, left his wife and children in Italy, settling a competence on them. At eighty-three, settled his remaining property on his eldest son and returned to Italy penniless. His family repulsed him and Browning raised a subscription which supported him in Florence.

*During the nineteenth century money was worth, on the average, perhaps five times its value today.*

Byron (1788–1824). Could not live within his large inherited income. 1816: Got £300 for *Manfred*. 1817: Got £300 for *Lament of Tasso*—Refused £1500 for fourth canto of *Childe Harold*—Sold ancestral Newstead Abbey for £94,500, having previously got £25,000 forfeit on a sale of it which was not completed. 1821: Got £2710 for three tragedies, *Cain*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*. 1823: Refused a legacy of £2000 from Shelley. 1823: Rochdale sold for £34,000 to finance the Greek expedition—Rations alone for this cost £400 per week.

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Shelley (1792-1822). At nineteen, expelled from Oxford—Allowance of £200 from father—This stopped when married Harriet Westbrook—Supported by Uncle Pilford and father-in-law, the latter giving Harriet, henceforth, £200 allowance. 1812: Shelley's allowance restored “to prevent my cheating strangers.” 1814: Eloped with Mary Godwin. Had mortgaged much of his expectations and his present allowance to lend money to Godwin. Was penniless, in debt and pursued by bailiffs. Friend Hogg once arrested, being taken for Shelley. 1815: Death of grandfather—Shelley received £7400 in cash and £1000 a year during joint lives of himself and his father—Cash settlement was already mostly spent—Sent Harriet £200 cash and paid her allowance of £200, making her total income £400. *Best poetry written after came into inheritance.*

Keats (1795-1821). Educated for surgery out of inheritance. 1817: Had in hand about £600 yielding about £50 a year, and additional income of £12 a year—Expectation of £1150 further inheritance nine years thereafter, and of about £900 more upon death of his uncle—Total prospect over £2500—Decided to take a chance on poetry—Tried to live on income but had to dun publishers for advances. 1818: Had spent £100 of capital and loaned £200, mostly to Haydon, and had £300 left—brother George went to America leaving him £500 more. No record of where this £800 went, some probably to Haydon, most of it probably back to George, who lost everything in America. Keats had small expenses, living rent-free with friend Brown. 1819: So broke that considered borrowing money to study for M.D.—Borrowed money from publishers to get through the year—*Best year of poetry*—Attempted commercial writing and failed. 1820: George came to England and returned again to America, leaving John with £100—In September publisher forgave him £200 owing, in return for copyrights of *Endymion* and *Lamia*, both of which had been commercial failures, and gave him further letter of credit for £150 for use in Italy. 1821: George, having now made good in America, paid all his debts.

Emerson (1803-1882). Worked his way through col-

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lege and divinity school. 1829: Ordained and chosen pastor of Old North Church, Boston. 1832: Resigned pastorate and wife died, leaving him \$22,000. Later made about \$1000 a year lecturing. Quit lecturing in old age when books sold well.

Whittier (1807-1892). Poor farm boy. Earned money to go to Haverhill Academy by making slippers at eight cents a pair, and "calculated so closely . . . that he knew before the beginning of the term he would have twenty-five cents to spare and he actually did." 1828: Editor of *The American Manufacturer*, Boston. 1830: Editor of *The New England Weekly Review*, Hartford. 1837: Editor of *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, Philadelphia. 1840: Forced by frail health to retire to Amesbury, Massachusetts, where he lived by free-lance writing, both prose and verse.

Poe (1809-1849). Educated by foster-family. 1827: Left home and served in army till 1829. 1830: Entered West Point. 1831: Expelled for disobedience. Great poverty. 1833: \$50 prize for prose—New friends and some patronage. 1835-1836: Editor *Southern Literary Messenger*—Fired for drunkenness. Free-lance—poverty. 1839: Editor *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*—Fired for negligence. 1841-1842: Editor *Graham's Magazine*—Fired for "irregularities." 1843: Borrowed money from Horace Greeley and bought the *Broadway Journal* which failed. 1844-1845: Hack-work and increasing poverty. 1846: Moved with dying wife to Fordham—privation. 1847-1848: Source of support uncertain. 1849: Engaged himself to a wealthy widow.

Tennyson (1809-1892). Educated by his family. 1830: Father died—Inherited small annuity, sufficient to live but not to continue education. *Best poetry written in next ten years*. At about thirty invested all his money in a wood-carving factory. 1842: *Poems by Alfred Tennyson* a commercial success, and continued to sell. 1844: Wood-carving factory collapsed. 1845: Government pension of £300. 1850: Was made Laureate—World-wide success of *In Memoriam*, and thereafter of all his work. 1884: Raised to peerage.

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Browning (1812-1889). Inherited and preserved a comfortable fortune.

Whitman (1819-1892). Poor boy. At twelve, printer's devil. 1831-1846: Worked in printer's office and taught in country school. 1846-1848: Editor *Brooklyn Eagle*. 1848: Job on *The New Orleans Crescent*. 1849: Editor *The Free-man*—financial failure. 1850-1862: Lived with his family, occasionally helping his father at carpentry—*period of first Leaves of Grass*. 1862: Visiting wounded in Washington, and job in the Paymaster General's office. 1863: Made wound-dresser, and job in the Department of the Interior. 1864: Fired from latter because of frankness of *Leaves of Grass*. New job in the Attorney General's office. During Washington period, also did special articles for New York papers. 1873: Stroke—Accepted brother's hospitality—Country-wide subscription raised for him. 1875: Refused much hospitality—Though permanently invalidated, peddled his books in Philadelphia, in all weather—Had a little money left from the subscription. 1877: Bought a house and set up with Mrs. Davis in Camden, living thereafter on their combined resources.

Rossetti (1828-1882). Made money at painting from the outset, £2000 a year during his best period. Made valuable collections of china and curios, the sale of which adequately supported him in his later unproductive years.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). Supported always, first by father, afterwards by his estate.

Swinburne (1837-1909). Independent income always.

Thompson (1859-1907). Supported by his father till twenty-six, failing successively to qualify for the priesthood, medicine, the army, and business. While twenty-six and twenty-seven, a bum in London—chief occupation, selling matches and calling cabs. At twenty-eight, sent a poem to *Merry England* which Wilfrid Meynell accepted. After some years in a sanatorium—*where he wrote his best poetry*—became a competent journalist. Was always indifferent to money, and Meynell habitually paid his rent.

There follows a tabulation of 261 poets, which aims to show their economic condition *at the time of their best pro-*

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*duction.* It is upon this table that I have based my conclusions, stated earlier, to wit:

- I.—*The ideal economic state for the poet is one of comfort, free of the financial worry of either great wealth or poverty.*
- II.—*Under the Patronage System poets approached this ideal state more frequently than under the Democratic System.*

As bearing upon the first proposition, the four main headings of the table are as follows:

- A. Opulence.
- B. Comfortable Financial Condition.
- C. Inadequate Financial Condition.
- D. Poverty and Want.

As bearing upon the second proposition, each of these main headings is divided into four others, showing the source of the poet's livelihood, namely:

1. Sale of Poetry.
2. Independent Resources.
3. Patronage.
4. Occupations other than Poetry.
  - a. Part-time Occupation, leaving considerable leisure in which to write poetry.
  - b. Full-time Occupation, leaving little leisure in which to write poetry.

The allocations of the poets to the various divisions of the table are *as of their periods of best production.* In the many cases where some secondary source of livelihood was operative at the same time, or where some different financial status or means of livelihood obtained at some less productive time; in these cases I have placed a *star* (\*) after the poet's name which will be found elsewhere *in parenthesis* under some collateral source of livelihood or different financial condition. For example, we usually think of Whitman as a journalist and war nurse. But neither of these was his occupation during his most productive period, and they are both, therefore, listed incidentally in parentheses. During Whitman's best creative burst, from 1850 to 1860, he was in popular terms

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a loafer, a hanger around saloons and a rider on busses and ferries. He helped his father a little at carpentering, but mostly he did nothing. Poor as his father's condition was, it was good enough for Walt, and he lived on his family. He was, in other words, supported by patronage. And so I have listed him.

In a few cases I have been unable to say that any one source of employment was the principal one during the period of best production. In these cases I have double-starred (\*\*) the poet's name *outside of parenthesis* in each of the two or more headings under which it will be found.

In dividing the poets under the main headings of "Opulence," "Comfortable Financial Condition," "Inadequate Financial Condition," and "Poverty and Want," I have tried to represent less the actual circumstances of each poet than his own feelings toward them, his satisfaction or dissatisfaction with them, depending upon his own standard of living and demands upon the world. Whitman, for instance, never enjoyed anything approaching what might technically be called financial ease. Yet his standard of living was low and he was content, during the production of the basic *Leaves*, to live in his bare room in his father's house, subsisting on his family's extremely humble fare. So much support was his without effort, and he was, therefore, from his own point of view, in a "Comfortable Financial Condition." Sidney, on the other hand, was a rich man by any standard. But so expensive were his courtly tastes, and so necessary it was under his philosophy to maintain the feudal splendor to which he was born, that his large income was in fact insufficient; he was perpetually worried about money and was, therefore, in an "Inadequate Financial Condition."

### *Wealth and Poverty of the Poets*

#### *A. Opulence:*

##### *1. From the Sale of Poetry:*

Pope, Macpherson\*, Scott\*. Total, 3. (In addition to these, Hayley, Byron and Lowell increased their wealth considerably by the sale of their poetry.)

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### 2. *From Independent Resources:*

Gower, Douglas\*\*, Wyatt\*, Surrey\*, Sackville, Vere\*, James VI\*, Donne\*, Stirling\*, Drummond, Wither\*\*, Walley\*, Suckling, Duchess of Newcastle, Roscommon, Sedley\*, Rochester, Sheffield\*, Hayley\*, Freneau\*, Rogers\*, Landor\*, Byron\*, Macaulay\*\*, Bulwer-Lytton\*, Lowell\*. Total, 26. (In addition to the foregoing, James I, Carew, Lovelace, enjoyed great wealth at periods other than those of their best production.)

### 3. *Under Patronage (including prolonged hospitality, gifts, pensions, allowances, or nominal or part-time employment given for the purpose of support to encourage writing):*

James I of Scotland\*, Raleigh\*, Spenser, Carew\*. Total, 4. (Douglas after his banishment from Scotland was supported at the court of Henry VIII. Also Stirling's inherited wealth was greatly increased by royal patronage.)

### 4. *From Occupations Other than Poetry:*

#### a. *Part-time Occupation (including prose writing and other literary pursuits but excluding part-time employment given as patronage), leaving considerable leisure in which to write poetry:*

Douglas\*\*, Corbet, Sprat. Total, 3. (Also, the income of the following was increased by part-time employment: Wyatt, Surrey, Vere, Raleigh, Donne, Stirling, Waller, Sedley, Sheffield, Freneau, Macpherson, Rogers, Scott, Landor, Lowell and Bulwer-Lytton.)

#### b. *Full-time Occupation (including prose writing and other literary pursuits and full-time government employment) leaving little leisure in which to write poetry:*

Macaulay\*\*. Total, 1. (Also, James I of Scotland, James VI—James I of England—and Lowell.)

## B. *Comfortable Financial Condition:*

### 1. *From the Sale of Poetry:*

Gay\*\*, Tannahill\*, Moore\*\*, Felicia Hemans, Jean Ingelow, Riley\*\*. Total, 6. (In addition to these the following prospered either partially or temporarily from the sale of their poetry: Dryden, Southey, Campbell, James and Horace Smith, Whittier, Longfellow, Tennyson.)

### 2. *From Independent Resources:*

Greville\*, Wotton\*, Beaumont\*, Quarles, Milton\*\*, Lee\*\*, Walsh\*\*, Granville\*, Somerville, Blair\*\*, Lyttleton\*, Hammond, Shenstone\*, Wilcox\*\*, Drake, Shelley, Praed\*, Beddoes,

\*—\*\*—For explanation of stars and double stars see pages 309-10.

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Emerson\*, Elizabeth Barrett, Fitzgerald, Doyle\*, Browning, Devere, Story\*, Patmore\*, Swinburne, Emily Dickinson. Total, 28. (In addition to the foregoing, the material comfort of the following was abetted or temporarily supplied by independent income: Lyndsay, Frere, Denham, Rowe, Wordsworth, Barlow, Darwin, Moore, Holmes, Stevenson.)

### 3. *Under Patronage:*

Chaucer\*, Dunbar\*, Lyndsay\*, Gascoigne, Chapman\*, Daniel, Drayton, Marlowe\*\*, Jonson\*, Browne, Milton\*\*, Butler, Denham\*, Cowley\*, Marvell\*, Dryden\*\*, A. Phillips\*\*, Addison\*, Rowe\*, Gay\*\*, Thomson, Whitehead, Collins\*\*, Akenside\*, Gifford\*, Beattie\*\*, Wolcot\*\*, Phillis Wheatley\*, Crabbe\*\*, Cowper\*, Frere\*\*, Wordsworth\*\*, Southey\*, Moore\*\*, Bryant\*, Whitman\*, Thompson\*. Total, 37. (In addition, patronage abetted or temporarily supplied financial comfort to Barbour, Shakespeare, Herbert, Congreve, Young, Mallet, Blake, Coleridge, Hunt, Clare, Tennyson.)

### 4. *From Occupations Other than Poetry:*

#### a. *Part-time Occupation (including prose writing and other literary pursuits but excluding part-time employment given as patronage), leaving considerable leisure in which to write poetry:*

Cædmon, Barbour\*, Lydgate, Barclay, Henryson, Grimald, Lodge†, Southwell, Shakespeare\*†, Fletcher\*\*†, Hall, Phineas and Giles Fletcher, Ford†, King, Herrick, Herbert\*, Shirley†, Cartwright, Crashaw, Dryden\*\*†, Shadwell†, Aphra Behn†, Cleland, Walsh\*\*, Prior, Pomfret, Swift, Congreve\*†, Yalden, Fenton, Young\*, Blair\*\*, Carey\*\*, Gray, Blacklock, Chatterton\*\*, Wilkie, Warton, Falconer, Wolcot\*\*, Crabbe\*\*, J. Cunningham\*, Bowles, Grahame, Wilson, Frere\*\*, E. Elliot, Tenant, Wilcox\*\*, Motherwell, Watts, Pollock, Whittier\*\*, Kingsley, W. Johnson, Rossetti, A. Smith, T. E. Brown, Symonds, Stevenson\*, Dixon, Riley\*\*, Hilton, S. Phillips, Hardy. Total, 66. (In addition to the foregoing, the financial comfort of the following was abetted or temporarily supplied by part-time employment: Dunbar, Lyndsay, Chapman, Beaumont†, Jonson†, Wotton, Quarles, Denham, Waller, Marvell, Addison, A. Phillips†, Gay†, Blackmore, Granville, Garth, Hughes, Glover,

\*—\*\*—For explanation of stars and double stars, see pages 309-10.

† I have here included the poetic dramatists, since it was the dramatic rather than the poetic aspect of their plays which was remunerative. I have called this dramatic writing "part-time" because, being itself poetic, it did not interfere with poetic composition.

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Akenside, Gifford, Coleridge, Moore, Praed, Emerson, Patmore, Doyle, Thompson.)

b. *Full-time Occupation (including prose writing and other literary pursuits and full-time government employment), leaving little leisure in which to write poetry:*

Tusser, Davenant, Bradstreet, N. Cotton, Wigglesworth, Blackmore\*, VanBrugh, Garth\*, Hughes\*, Tickle, Ramsay, Mallet\*, Byrom, Lillo, Armstrong, Glover\*, Grainger, Darwin\*, Mickle, Beattie\*\*, Trumbull, Barlow\*, Burns\*\*, Hopkinson, Montgomery, Leyden, White, Lamb, Key, James and Horace Smith\*, Barton, A. Cunningham, Campbell, Peacock, Woodworth, R. H. Wilde, Cornwall, Keble, Percival, Hood, Barnes, Simms, Whittier\*\*, Longfellow\*, Holmes\*, Hake, Nicoll, Julia Ward Howe, Parsons, Arnold, Dobell, Meredith, Morris, Clough, H. F. Carey, Gilbert, O'Shaughnessy, Lang, Henley, Field, W. H. Drummond. Total, 62. (In addition to the foregoing, the financial comfort of the following was abetted or temporarily supplied by full-time employment: Chaucer, Greville, C. Cotton, Milton, Cowley, Stepney, Lyttleton, Cowper, Crabbe, Tannahill, Bryant, Story, Whitman, Hardy.)

### C. Inadequate Financial Condition:

#### 1. Sale of Poetry:

(Goldsmith and Hogg improved their condition by the sale of their poetry.)

#### 2. Independent Resources:

Sidney\*, Wither\*\*, C. Cotton\*, Stepney\*, Keats\*, Tennyson\*, Emily Brontë\*\*. Total, 7. (Also, temporarily, Shenstone, Freneau, Landor and Shelley.)

#### 3. Patronage:

Peele\*\*, Wordsworth\*\*, Hogg, Coleridge\*. Total, 4. (Also, temporarily, E. Smith, Bloomfield and Keats.)

#### 4. From Occupations Other than Poetry:

##### a. Part-time:

Langland, Peele\*\*\*†, Greene†, Marlowe\*\*\*†, Fletcher\*\*\*†, E. Smith, A. Phillips\*\*, Settle, Dyer, Goldsmith\*, Blake\*, Lanier. Total, 12. (Also, Sidney, Donne and Coleridge.)

##### b. Full-time:

Occlive, Chamberlayne, J. Taylor, Vaughan, S. Johnson, Ferguson, Burns\*\*, Hogg\*\*, Hunt\*, Emily Brontë\*\*, Gordon, Bruce. Total, 12. (Also, Riley in his youth.)

\*-\*\*—For explanation of stars and double stars, see pages 309-10. See note, opposite page.

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**D. Poverty and Want** (*in this case the four sub-headings give the resources from which the poets attempted or presumed to live.*)

**1. Sale of Poetry:**

Churchyard\*\*, Carey\*\*, Collins\*\*, Pattison. Total, 4. (Chatterton realized a little from the sale of the Rowley poems.)

**2. Independent Resources:**

Lovelace\*. Total, 1.

**3. Patronage:**

Churchyard\*\*, Savage\*. Total, 2. (Besides these Lee and J. Cunningham got a little inconsequential patronage.)

**4. Occupations Other than Poetry:**

**a. Part-time:**

Nash, Dekkar†, Lee\*\*†, Otway†, Carey\*\*†, Smart, Chatterton\*\*, Thom, Dowson. Total, 9. (Occasionally Churchyard, Savage and Thompson.)

**b. Full-time:**

Bloomfield\*, Clare\*, Poe. Total, 3. (Also Phillis Wheatley.)

Condensing the above table we get the following results:

	<b>A OPULENCE</b>	<b>B COMFORT</b>	<b>C INADE- QUATE CONDITION</b>	<b>D WANT</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
I. <i>Sale of Poetry</i>	3	6	..	4	13
II. <i>Independent Re- sources</i>	26	28	7	1	62
III. <i>Patronage</i>	4	37	4	2	47
IV. <i>Collateral Occu- pation</i>					
a. <i>Part-time</i>	3	66	12	9	90
b. <i>Full-time</i>	1	62	12	3	78
<b>Totals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>290†</b>

† This total is larger than that announced on page 308 because of twenty-nine duplications which are reflected here but are subtracted from the actual total of poets listed as stated earlier.

The vertical totals here seem well enough to substantiate my assertion that poetry arises most easily from comfortable financial circumstances. 199 in the column of "Comfort" against 91 in all the other columns combined.

\*—\*\*—For explanation of stars and double stars, see pages 309-10.

† See note on page 312.

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But the horizontal totals seem to belie my argument that poets were better off under Patronage than under the modern compulsion to take up some collateral occupation. "Patronage" and "Independent Resources" together total only 109, against 168 in the two divisions of occupation.

In rebuttal of this inference are the following considerations:

The "part-time" line includes twenty poetic dramatists who, as indicated on page 312, were actually engaged in an employment that gave them full freedom to write poetry.

The larger number of "part-time" occupations I have listed have left the poets a great deal of freedom to write—such as ministries and fellowships which have left the poets almost as free as they would have been with independent resources or under patronage.

The "full-time" list includes but few poets who are usually considered "major."

In substantiation of the last statement, here is the same table but presenting only the twenty poets I selected as probably immortal:

	A OPULENCE	B COMFORT	C INADEQUATE CONDITION	D WANT	TOTALS
I. <i>Sale of Poetry</i>	Pope	Milton**	...	..	I
II. <i>Independent Re- sources</i>	Donne	Shelley	Keats	..	8
	Byron	Emerson	Tennyson		
III. <i>Patronage</i>	Spenser	Browning	Wordsworth**	..	10
		Chaucer	Coleridge		
		Marlowe**			
		Milton**			
		Dryden**			
		Wordsworth**			
IV. <i>Collateral Occu- pation</i>		Whitman			
<i>a. Part-time</i>	....	Thompson			
		Shakespeare	Marlowe**	..	4
		Dryden**			
		Gray			
		Burns**	Burns**	..	2
<i>b. Full-time</i>	....				
<i>Totals</i>	4	15	6	0	25‡

\*\* For explanation of double stars, see pages 309-10.

† This total exceeds 20 because of the duplication of Marlowe, Dryden, Milton, Burns, and Wordsworth.

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This smaller table tells a different story from the larger one. Disregarding the duplications, sixteen out of twenty great poets have subsisted during periods of best production either upon private resources or under patronage. Of the six who have had periods of great productiveness under different circumstances: Pope was rich in his best period; the "part-time" employment of Shakespeare and Marlowe was the composition of poetic plays; Gray's "part-time" job was a fellowship which required him to carry on only a reasonable amount of research; only Dryden and Burns were engaged in occupations that interfered with their poetry (Dryden never took his poetic plays as anything but hack work); and only Burns had a full-time collateral job when he did his best work. If the list be expanded to include the near-great poets I listed on pages 297-308, the general indications will be the same: *Enduring poetry is usually produced in comfortable circumstances, maintained either by independent resources or patronage.*

It may be put in evidence against the Patronage System that our list shows only five poets (Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Milton, and Dryden) who flourished contemporaneously with the system—that is, before 1790—and were supported by it; while there were apparently four poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Whitman and Thompson) who enjoyed patronage under the *Democratic System*—that is since 1790. The answer to this evidence is that the more modern patronage has generally been a personal business and inadequate. Spenser and Chaucer were splendidly and permanently set up. Coleridge's various allowances were uncertain and his condition always precarious. Wordsworth was in trying circumstances during at least half of his best period (1795-1800). Whitman's patronage consisted of his poor father's fare of Irish potatoes. The Meynell-Thompson relationship alone bears some resemblance to the old, impersonal, responsible patronage. If the list of forty-four poets noted on pages 297-308 be consulted, the proportion of poets who flourished under proper aristocratic patronage, and in the time of the Patronage System, will be found to be greater than in the list of twenty just given. In that list, of twenty-eight lead-

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ing poets who reached their maturity before 1790, thirteen enjoyed patronage; of sixteen who reached their maturity since 1790, only the four named above enjoyed appreciable patronage of any kind.

The following table shows the occupations the poets have pursued in the absence of or to supplement other resources, being an expansion of the heading in the former table, "Collateral Occupation." The stars (\*), double stars (\*\*) and parentheses have the same meanings here as in the preceding table as explained on pages 309-10. They are also synthesized with the same signs in the earlier table, so that if the sign corresponding to a star, a double star, or a parenthesis, is not found here it will be found in the earlier table under one or more of the headings, "Sale of Poetry," "Independent Resources," or "Patronage."

### *Sources of Livelihood of the Poets, Other than Sale of Poetry, Independent Resources, or Patronage*

#### *A. Literature Other than Poetry:*

##### *1. Creative literature:*

Lodge\*\*\*†, Peele\*\*\*†, Greene†, Shakespeare\*†, Marlowe\*\*\*†, Fletcher†, Dekkar†, Ford\*\*\*†, Shirley†, Dryden\*\*\*†, Shadwell†, A. Behn\*†, Otway†, Lee\*\*\*†, Congreve\*†, S. Johnson\*, Smart, Goldsmith\*, Poe\*\*, Meredith\*\*, Symonds, Hardy\*, Stevenson\*. (In addition to the foregoing, the following supported themselves by creative literature other than poetry, partially or temporarily: Sidney, Jonson†, Chapman†, Beaumont†, A. Phillips†, Addison, Gay†, Hughes, Warton, Scott, Coleridge, Landor, Emerson, Macaulay, Kingsley, Bulwer-Lytton.)

##### *2. Hack writing:*

Nash, E. Smith\*, Settle, A. Phillips\*\*, Chatterton\*\*, Dowson. (In addition to the foregoing, the following supported themselves by hack writing, partially or temporarily: Fenton, Savage, Mallet, S. Johnson.)

##### *3. Journalism:*

Montgomery, Barlow\*\*, Campbell\*, Hunt\*, Woodworth, Motherwell, Hood\*, Whittier, Poe\*\*, Nicoll, Julia Ward Howe\*\*,

† Here, as in the former table, I have represented the poetic dramatists as subsisting otherwise than by the sale of poetry, because it was the dramatic rather than the poetic feature of their work that was remunerative.

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Meredith\*\*, Lang, Henley, Field, Riley\*\*. (In addition to the foregoing, the following supported themselves by journalism, partially or temporarily: Ramsay, Gifford, Freneau, Coleridge, Moore, Bryant, Lowell, Whitman, Thompson.)

### 4. Publishing:

(Ramsay, Scott and Morris supported themselves by publishing, partially or temporarily.)

### B. Art Other than Literature:

Painting—Dyer, Blake\*\*, Rossetti.

Music—Lanier (Goldsmith during part of his youth).

Architecture—Van Brugh (Hardy in his youth).

(Story became a sculptor after he stopped writing poetry.)

### C. Public Service—other than military or naval (excluding part-time government employment given as patronage):

Occlive, Davenant\*\*, Walsh\*\*, Prior, Hughes\*, Tickell, Mallet\*, Trumbull\*, Barlow\*\*, Burns\*\*, Frere\*\*, Hopkinson\*\*, Leyden\*\*, Macaulay\*\*, Doyle\*\*, Arnold\*. (In addition to the foregoing, the following supported themselves by public employment, partially or temporarily: Chaucer, Barbour, James I, Lyndsay, Wyatt, Vere, Raleigh, Sidney, Greville, James VI, Wotton, Donne, Stirling, Quarles, Waller, Milton, Denham, Cowley, Marvell, Sedley, Aphra Behn, Blackmore, Stepney, Granville, Garth, Addison, A. Phillips, Young, Lyttleton, Glover, Scott, Praed, Bulwer-Lytton, Whitman, Clough, Lowell.)

### D. Military or Naval Service:

Cleland, Falconer\*\*. (In addition to the foregoing, the following were at one time or other professionally in military or naval service: Surrey, Churchyard, Raleigh, Sidney, Sheffield, C. Cotton, Poe.)

### E. Ministry:

Cædmon, Barbour\*, Langland, Lydgate, Douglas\*\*, Barclay, Southwell, Hall, Corbet, Phineas and Giles Fletcher, King, Herrick, Herbert\*, Cartwright\*\*, Crashaw, Spratt, Wigglesworth\*, Swift, Pomfret, Yalden, Watts, Young\*, Blair\*\*, Blacklock, Grahame, Wolcot\*\*, Crabbe\*\*, Bowles, Keble\*, Wilcox\*\*, Pollok, Barnes\*\*, Kingsley\*, Dixon, Hilton. (Also, temporarily or incidentally, Dunbar, Donne and Warton.)

### F. Law:

Ford\*\*, Chatterton\*\*, Barlow\*\*, Hopkinson\*\*, J. Smith\*, Leyden\*\*, Key, R. H. Wilde, Cornwall, Macaulay\*\*, Simms, Gilbert. (In addition to the foregoing, the following supported themselves by the practice of law, partially or temporarily: Donne, Vaughan, Cowper, Trumbull, Scott, Bryant, Story, Praed.)

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### G. Medicine:

Lodge\*\*, Chamberlayne, Vaughan\*, N. Cotton\*, Blackmore\*, Garth\*, Byrom, Armstrong, Grainger, Darwin\*, Percival\*, Holmes\*, Hake, Parsons, W. H. Drummond. (In addition to the foregoing, Cowley, Wigglesworth, Akenside and Crabbe supported themselves by the practice of medicine, partially or temporarily.)

### H. Teaching, Lecturing and Education:

Henryson, Grimald, Cartwright\*\*, Fenton\*, Gray\*\*, Wilkie, Warton\*, Beattie\*\*, Bruce, Tennant, Barnes\*\*, Longfellow\*, Clough, W. Johnson, A. Smith, T. E. Brown. (In addition to the foregoing, the following engaged in teaching, lecturing or professional education, partially or temporarily: Milton, Macpherson, Coleridge, Leyden, Keble, Percival, Emerson, Lowell, Doyle, Arnold, Morris.)

### I. Science and Scholarship:

Gray\*\* (classics, music, architecture, antiquarianism), Wilson (ornithology), O'Shaughnessy (ichthyology). (In addition to the foregoing, the following supported themselves by scientific work or scholarship, partially or temporarily: Leyden\*\* [orientology], Percival [philology, geography and geology].)

### J. Housewife or Housekeeper:

Anne Bradstreet, Julia Ward Howe\*\*, Emily Brontë\*\*. Also, at the end of her life, Phillis Wheatley.)

### K. Library Work:

Henry Francis Carey. (Also Patmore.)

### L. Banking or Finance:

H. Smith\*, Barton, Dobell. (Rogers also worked at convenience in the bank which he inherited.)

### M. Trade and Manufacture:

Jewelry—Lillo.

Bookselling—Ramsay, Barlow\*\*.

Merchandising—Glover\*.

Peddling—Thom\*.

Iron Manufacture—E. Elliot.

Manufacture of Furniture and Decorations—Morris\*.

### N. Crafts:

Brewing—Mickle\*\*.

Printing—Mickle\*\* (Whitman, Morris sometimes).

Engraving—Blake\*\* (Hood).

Shoemaking—Bloomfield\*.

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Weaving—(Tannahill, Thom, Morris).

Sign-painting—(Riley, in his youth).

Carpentry—(Whitman).

*O. Agriculture:*

Tusser, Burns\*\*, Hogg\*\*, Clare\*.

*P. Horsemanship:*

Gordon.

*Q. Theatre Management:*

Davenant\*\*.

*R. Acting:*

J. Cunningham\*, S. Phillips. (Lodge, Shakespeare, Jonson, Lee.)

*S. Sailor:*

Falconer\*\*.

*T. Boatman:*

J. Taylor.

*U. Private Clerkship:*

Fergusson, White, Lamb, A. Cunningham, Peacock. (Donne.)

One inference to be gathered from these figures is that with the rise of the Democratic System—that is, since 1790—there has been an exodus of poets from Public Service and from the Ministry and a movement into Journalism and Teaching, especially the former. Public Service and the Ministry were both leisurely employments involving only part-time attention, being usually so close to the nominal jobs of patronage that the distinction is hard to draw. Apparently there have been in modern times fewer of these easy jobs available to the poets, wherefore many of them have been forced into the exacting democratic business of journalism. So much the worse for poetry. Incidentally, it is noticeable that Burns is the only one on our list of twenty great poets who is found in any occupation other than that of poetry, or of the poetic drama, or of scholarship.

There follow miscellaneous anecdotes more or less related to the livelihoods of the poets, or to their manual dexterity or other forms of practicality:

In 1621 King James sent for Donne to attend him at dinner, and when the King had sat down he said, "Doctor Donne, . . . though you sit not down with me, yet I will

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carve to you of a dish which I know you love well; for, knowing you love London, I do therefore make you Dean of St. Paul's; and when I have dined, then do you take your beloved dish home to your study, say grace there to yourself, and much good may it be to you."

Early in his parliamentary career Marvell spent a year and a half abroad as Secretary to Lord Carlisle during the latter's embassage to the Tsar. The embassy landed at Archangel and journeyed southward through bitter cold on 200 dog sledges which Lord Carlisle had to finance himself. During this phase of the expedition it was Marvell's duty to protest continuously and ineffectually against the horrible accommodations that were offered them. On reaching Moscow they were kept outside the walls all night, in order that the Tsar and his ladies might witness their entry in the morning. In the entering procession Marvell rode on the ambassador's sledge, carrying his credentials sewn on a yard of red damask. At the official reception it was his duty to read and pronounce all the titles of the Tsar, which he did very gravely, to the delight of his colleagues. When the Tsar and his men rose their tissue vests crackled, and all the English giggled. After the ceremony Marvell received a solemn protest from the Russians for having in his address called the Tsar *serenissimus* instead of *illustrius*. To which Marvell replied in a treatise of great length and facetious learning, justifying his choice of superlatives, which was duly considered by the Russians, and at length accepted.

Settle had a stock elegy and a stock epithalamium, each printed off with blanks for the names. On the death or marriage of any person of consequence he hastily filled in the name, sent the verse to the parties interested, and hoped for the best. He who had once crossed swords with Dryden closed his life as a composer of "drolls" to be acted in a booth at St. Bartholomew Fair. Having on one occasion specified a dragon for use in a droll called "St. George for England," and having seen to its manufacture in green leather, two ladies of quality visiting the fair were so ravished by the idea of the dragon that they begged that the inventor himself should be the first to vitalize it. So poor

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old Settle appeared on the stage in his own green leather contrivance, writhing, hissing and spitting “streams of fire to make the butchers gape.”

Swift, being parsimonious frankly “for the pleasure of accumulating money,” was peculiarly exact in his hospitality. On one occasion Pope and Gay, who were perhaps his closest friends, appeared unexpectedly about supper time. Pope gives the account: “‘Heyday, gentlemen (says the Doctor), what’s the meaning of this visit? How come you to leave all the great Lords, that you are so fond of, to come hither to see a poor Dean?’—‘Because we would rather see you than any of them.’—‘Ay, any one that did not know you so well as I do, might believe you. But since you are come, I must get some supper for you, I suppose.’ ‘No, Doctor, we have supped already.’ ‘Supped already? that’s impossible! why, ‘tis not eight o’clock yet.—That’s very strange; but, if you had not supped, I must have got something for you.—Let me see, what should I have had? A couple of lobsters; ay, that would have done very well; two shillings—tarts, a shilling: but you will drink a glass of wine with me, though you supped so much before your usual time only to spare my pocket?’ ‘No, we had rather talk with you than drink with you.’ ‘But if you had supped with me, as in all reason you ought to have done, you must then have drunk with me.—A bottle of wine, two shillings—two and two is four, and one is five: just two-and-six-pence a-piece. There, Pope, there’s half a crown for you, and there’s another for you, Sir; for I won’t save anything by you, I am determined.’—This was all said and done with his usual seriousness on such occasions; and, in spite of every thing we could say to the contrary, he actually obliged us to take the money.” As Swift grew older he expanded this practice and, in lieu of providing anything beyond wine, presented each one of his guests, men and women alike, with a shilling “that they might please themselves with their own provision.” At last he refused wine also and thus, for “in Ireland no man visits where he can not drink,” deprived himself of all company.

Of Savage’s economy Johnson says: “He appeared to

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think himself born to be supported by others, and dispensed from all necessity of providing for himself; he therefore never prosecuted any scheme to advantage, nor endeavoured even to secure the profits which his writing might have afforded him." He sold *The Wanderer* for ten guineas, not because he was at the moment hard up, but because he was impatient to purchase some trifle and being unable, as always, to restrain himself, sold it to the first person he showed it to at the first price. *The Bastard* in which he lampooned his vicious mother was immediately popular, was in fact the rage and went swiftly through five editions. It was the only real success Savage ever produced. But he had sold it to a cheap bookseller for a few shillings! About the same time he got a £50 pension from Queen Caroline as her special "Volunteer Laureate." In spite of which and though £50 was sufficient to a single man's support, this period of his middle and later thirties represented the longest stretch of squalor in his career. I quote Johnson: ". . . no sooner had he received his pension, than he withdrew to his darling privacy, from which he returned in a short time to his former distress, and for some part of the year generally lived by chance, eating only when he was invited to the tables of his acquaintances, from which the meanness of his dress often excluded him. . . . He lodged as much by accident as he dined, and passed the night sometimes in mean houses, which are set open at night to any casual wanderers, sometimes in cellars among the riot and filth of the meanest and most profligate of the rabble; and sometimes, when he had not even the money to support even the expenses of these receptacles, walked about the streets till he was weary, and lay down in the summer upon a bulk, or in the winter, with his associates in poverty, among the ashes of a glass house."

Henry Carey, author of *God Save the King* and *Sally in Our Alley*, was starving at the very period when his songs were being rendered and applauded everywhere.

One day Doctor Johnson discovered Collins imprisoned in his lodgings by a bailiff who was "prowling in the street," waiting to arrest him for some debt. Johnson hastily fetched a bookseller, who then and there gave Collins a contract for

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a translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, with a sufficient advance to pay off the bailiff and leave the poor poet enough to get back home to Chichester. Soon after this his uncle died leaving him £2000. Collins is a case against the Patronage System, but not as grave a case as the superficial facts would imply. His period of misery and neglect was something less than four years. They were tragic years but far less tragic than similar periods in the lives of many other poets. If every writer who suffered neglect and hardship for four initial years should quit writing in result, I can think of very few of the distinguished names in Anglo-American literature that would ever have been known.

While Goldsmith, as a young man, was doing hack work for one Griffiths, book-seller and editor, he proposed to take an examination for the post of hospital mate in the army or navy. Desiring to make a good appearance, he induced Griffiths to go security for a new suit of clothes which were to be returned to the shopkeeper or paid for immediately after the examination. Having failed in the examination, and being hungry, Goldsmith pawned the suit. Griffiths paid the debt and sent him a threatening letter, to which Goldsmith replied: "I know of no misery but a jail, to which my own imprudences and your letter seem to point. I have seen it inevitable these three or four weeks, and by heavens! request it as a favour—as a favour that may prevent somewhat more fatal. I have been some years struggling with a wretched being—with all that contempt and indigence brings with it—with all those strong passions which make contempt insupportable. What, then, has a jail that is formidable?" Six years after this, when the *Traveller* had just appeared but had not yet begun its triumphant sale, Johnson received a message from Goldsmith that his landlady had called in an officer to arrest him for non-payment of his bill. Johnson immediately sent him a guinea and himself proceeded to the scene of battle at his own best speed. When he arrived Goldsmith had already broken the guinea to procure a bottle of madeira, and being well stimulated by the contents, was berating his landlady soundly when Johnson entered. The heavy angel interrupted his eloquence to inquire if he had

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any means of raising money, whereat Goldsmith produced the manuscript of a novel. This Johnson pocketed, hurried away to Newberry the bookseller, and returned shortly with £60. This was the *Vicar of Wakefield*.

Gifford's parents being dead, his godfather placed him at thirteen as a cabin-boy on a coasting vessel, and when he was fifteen apprenticed him to a shoemaker. Thereafter a Mr. Cooksley, a surgeon, came on some of his "lamentable doggerel" and raised a subscription for his education at Exeter College. While this was in process Gifford, in corresponding on literary subjects with a friend in London, formed the practice of enclosing his letters, to save postage, in a package addressed to Lord Grosvenor. On one occasion he forgot the address on the enclosed letter, and his Lordship, thinking it was for him, opened it, was delighted with the contents, sent for Gifford, established him in his house, and saw to his comfortable support thereafter.

Cottle, the Bath bookseller, thus describes the combined efforts of himself, Wordsworth and Coleridge to unharness the horse one day after a drive: "I removed the harness . . . , but . . . could not get off the collar. In despair I called for assistance. Mr. W. first brought his ingenuity into exercise, but, after several unsuccessful efforts, he relinquished the achievement as altogether impracticable. Mr. Coleridge now tried his hand, but . . . after twisting the poor horse's neck, almost to strangulation, and the great danger of his eyes, he gave up the useless task, pronouncing that 'the horse's head must have grown (gout or dropsy!) since the collar was put on! for it was a downright impossibility for such a huge *os frontis* to pass through so narrow a collar!' At about this juncture the servant girl appeared, turned the collar upside-down, and removed it."

Coleridge was forever making blind sallies toward the world of actuality in order to convince himself of the existence of his non-existent will. In 1792, being twenty years old, and at Cambridge, he found himself much befuddled between love, debts and all manner of self-mistrust. Determined to escape into action, he left Cambridge and enlisted in the Fifteenth Elliot's Light Dragoons. Seeing his ob-

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vious ineptitude, the recruiting corporal had the good sense to try to dissuade him. But the poet insisted, and enlisted under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbacke. An anecdote is told of his bravado shortly after enlistment, and it seems credible enough, existing in the realm of vocal expression rather than of action. The General of the district was inspecting recruits, and, looking sternly at Coleridge, demanded, "What's your name, sir?" "Comberbacke." "What do you come here for, sir?" "Sir, for what most other persons come—to be made a soldier." "Do you think," continued the General, "you can run a Frenchman through the body?" "I do not know," replied recruit Comberbacke, "as I never tried; but I'll let a Frenchman run me through the body before I'll run away." This brave speech passed Coleridge for the moment, but he never got beyond the awkward squad. He could neither sit nor groom his horse, and fell so frequently that he was finally put on ground duty. But he was popular with the soldiers who tended his horse for him in return for his writing their letters. After four months his family learned of his situation, he wrote the most abject letters to his older brother, and his discharge was obtained through procuring a servant to enlist in his place.

This was Keats's will, written to his publisher Taylor in August, 1820, just before he sailed for Italy:

My chest of Books divide among my friends.

In case of my death this scrap of paper may be serviceable in your possession.

All my Estate real and personal consists in the hopes of the sale of books publish'd or unpublish'd. Now I wish Brown and you to be the first paid Creditors—the rest is nubibus—but in case it should shower pay my tailor the few pounds I owe him.

Poe and his family, wintering in the wretched hovel that still stands beside the Grand Concourse in Fordham, were often without food and usually without fuel, covers, or stamps to post Poe's manuscripts. Virginia the child-wife, dying of consumption on a mattress spread before the fire-place, had for covering the family tortoise-shell cat and Poe's

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army coat, while Poe and Mrs. Clemm fared not so well. Of all Poe's literary hypocrisies the most moving is the notice he inserted in *The Express* for December, 1846: "We regret to learn that Edgar A. Poe and his wife are both dangerously ill with the consumption, and that the hand of misfortune lies heavy upon their temporal affairs. We are sorry to mention the fact that they are so far reduced as to be hardly able to obtain the necessities of life. This is indeed a hard lot, and we hope the friends and admirers of Mr. Poe will come promptly to his assistance in his bitterest hour of need."

Whistler once admired a picture Rossetti was painting, and some time afterward asked him how it was going. "All right," said Rossetti, "I have ordered a stunning frame for it." Later Whistler saw it framed, but not at all advanced in execution. "You've done nothing to it since I saw it, have you?" "No-o," said Rossetti, "but I've written a stunning sonnet on the subject." "Then," replied Whistler, "take out the picture and frame the sonnet."

Swinburne crossed streets through traffic looking straight ahead, with his hands hanging listlessly at his sides. The receipt of business letters made him "quiver with irritation." Once he was holding a reading in his room and, the company being assembled, he said that he was especially expecting Watts-Dunton, Burne-Jones and Marston. There followed a long wait, after which Swinburne jumped up and said he hoped he hadn't forgotten to ask these gentlemen —which he had. Once he organized a dinner commemorative of Lamb, and himself presided with great solemnity, the company including Gosse, Minto, Purdell and Watts-Dunton. Swinburne, however, had forgotten to ask the price of the dinner and everybody was badly stuck.

Once Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson, being in London, found themselves masters of a check for £100 and some odd smaller moneys. They decided to have a splurge in Paris and proceeded thither. After a few days they were startled to find their funds so low that they had to hurry back to England, and on reaching home found the £100 check among their papers, uncashed.

Thompson, in the underworld of London, age twenty-six—

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twenty-seven, came nearer to learning its technique than that of any other occupation he ever essayed. He was a successful seller of matches, hailer of cabs and holder of horses, but a failure as a boot-blacker, making only 6d in the week he essayed that employment. Having been snatched from the streets by an evangelical cobbler named McMasters, he made no progress at cobbling and his employer set him to putting up and taking down the heavy shutters at night and morning. One day Thompson dropped one of these on a customer's foot and hurt him badly. And so back on the streets. Years later he once showed that he was not wholly indifferent to money. It was a reading of *Othello* one evening at the Meynells'. "Desdemona was in her death agony, when an emphatic voice proclaimed, 'Here's a go, Mrs. Meynell; I have lost the *Athenæum* check.' But he found it in another pocket." Thompson neither owned nor desired any possessions. A literary man, he never owned a book-case nor enough books to fill one. On his death his estate consisted of "a tin box of refuse—pipes that would not draw, unopened letters, a spirit lamp without a wick, pens that would not write."

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Because of the poet's conviction that he is a special repository of truth and so a law unto himself, and because of his frequent willingness to martyr himself for this conviction, he naturally finds himself more or less pitted against the regimented generality of mankind. The result is a struggle and a drama, intense in proportion that the poet holds to his independence, anti-climactic in proportion that he surrenders and lapses into the ways of common men; a drama comic where the overt revolt of the prophet is merely petty or spectacular, pathetic where his unworldliness incapacitates him for survival so that he sinks at length into unfruitful privation and defeat, tragic where his vision drives him unto

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open attack upon society which retaliates to crush him with all its weight of habit and fear. For the poet is always a minority of one, and in practical terms he cannot possibly prevail against the inertia or the antagonism of mankind. He may win the martyr's inner victory in outward failure. By making concessions to society he may gain outward fame and success at the cost of his inner integrity. In rare cases he may achieve both where the expression of his honest inner vision or perception happily fails to frighten the heavy conventional giant that is the world.

In this section I wish to give a few anecdotes drawn from the poet's struggle against the world, that struggle which is fundamentally every man's but in which most men surrender, at least in overt action, at the frontier line of maturity. "Integrity," in the broad sense in which I use it here, is synonymous in some respects with "character," in others with "moral courage." It may be exhibited in the ability or inability to follow some proper and conventional resolve respecting personal conduct, or again in the degree to which the individual will stoop to intrigue for honor or support. More broadly it appears in the poet's success or failure in living according to his private moral convictions in defiance of the world's conventional codes; or again, in his more or less aggressively revolutionary attitude against constituted politics and economics. And most fundamental from the poet's special point of view, it means his poetic integrity, his belief in himself, and the truth of his perceptions, his central and unflinching conceit without which his other sorts of character and courage are incidental and indistinguishable from similar qualities in other men. It is by this poetic integrity more than by any other quality or talent that you may pick out the poet in the midst of the respectable world, and the maintenance of it by starving men, by sick men, by men riddled with vice and superficial moral weakness, offers a spectacle of nobility, a sort of early Christian grandeur seldom equalled outside the spiritual or imaginative callings.

Mere unconventionality of behavior on the part of one who writes verses is of course no mark of the poet, for the

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more spectacular biographies and larger encyclopedias are rich with cases of what might be called the Unconventionality of Vanity, as distinguished from the Unconventionality of Integrity. Often when a poet finds that his special inner importance is insufficiently appreciated in the responses of his fellows, he takes to proclaiming it by means of startling and vain acts or mannerisms which immediately set him off as peculiar and noticeable. Since the aim of such action is notoriety, it is a concession to the opinion of the world, and confesses an awareness of conventions which are honored sufficiently to be worth violating. Spectacular unconventionality alone is neither evidence of poetic integrity nor any threat to the codes it seems to attack; *in extremis* it is suitably treated by the insane asylum or the jail. But actually, the vain motive is usually tangled inwardly with the integral or truly poet-like one. And too often society in sensibly disciplining a fool, unjustly oppresses a great man. For society of course seldom discriminates. Vanity is a moribund phase of poetic integrity which latter asks communication with men but never acclaim for its own sake. The revolt of the true poet is naïve and necessary, and his integrity, far from wishing to draw attention to itself, is usually astonished and distressed to awake in the center of amused or disapproving eyes.

From the point of view of the extent of their revolt against the world, the poets are divisible roughly into four groups: the *Little Conventionalists*, the *Child Poets*, the *Great Revolutionaries* and the *Great Conventionalists*. By the *Little Conventionalists* I mean those who, possessing a talent for verse, yet go along with the rest of their generation in sacrificing their naïve perceptions, their poetic integrity, to the conveniences and comforts and practical necessities of living, until at length they are no more capable of fresh human perceptions than any well-adapted banker or elder of the church. According to the degree of their journalistic talent these have included at once the little and sighing poetasters and the most popular versifiers of each age, those who, speaking in a contemporary, conventionalized idiom of thought, have flourished while that idiom persisted and have

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vanished with it, and a later age wonders what men ever found in them to read. Our present concern is not with these but rather with the true poets who have recorded things as they saw them out of their lonely and naïve imaginations, without subservience to any conventionalized idiom, poets many of whom have passed unrecognized in their own day, but in whose works a later age has found something universally true beyond change of mode. The other three classes I shall mention are all of this kind.

The *Child Poets* are the “pure poets” *par excellence*. They are originals, startled strangers in the world, who stare uncomprehendingly at the great sign-boards of convention and pass along without having understood a single word of their threats and warnings. Lonely, self-sufficient and whimsical, their every gesture proclaims the subconscious assumption of the true poet that “I am beyond the pale.” Yet, happily for them, this basic conceit never gets entangled with their conscious ratiocination so as to transform them into zealots or proselytes. They never move out into systematic rebellion. They make no dangerous pronouncements of religious or civil heresy. They are either oblivious to politics and government or they hold fantastic utopian views and are mildly liberal. They say little to frighten society. They merely do queer and outrageous things in their private lives and, when the world remonstrates or bristles around them, stand bland and innocent like a puppy who has not been house-broken. They cause a timid rustle of outraged petticoats, but in the long run the world finds their peccadillos only laughable or endearing and lets them go their harmless way.

In the third class of poets, the *Great Revolutionaries*, the world recognizes a different article. Unhappily for them their perceptions penetrate directly to the oppression and wretchedness in the social scheme, and their honesty proclaims these perceptions from the printing press. The great smug world shudders at the attack of a single honest gad-fly, and begins to swat him with every instrument of criticism, law and espionage which it can hold in its fat and clumsy hand. Milton was fortunate first in the triumph of his party

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in the Civil Wars, and finally in Royalist friends who saved him from the noose. Wordsworth wearied of the fight and they got him at last to sign a recantation. And they ran Shelley out of England. Society takes small chances with these liberals and radicals. They are the people who are spied upon, indicted and deported. Their numbers include many fools, and many vicious and predatory men. Yet they may at any moment produce a great leader, a great liberator. Christ was of these, and Socrates and the prophets of the Old Testament.

The fourth category of poets with respect to the ways of the world, I have called the *Great Conventionalists*. It is a small class but an important one, including Emerson and Keats, and probably Shakespeare and Chaucer; and it stands an exhibit in evidence against the theory I have implied that true poets are necessarily unconventional people, unable to adapt themselves to the forms of custom and code. So far as we know each of these great poets was a conformist in his manners and his habits, conventional by current usage in his sins, and either indifferent to politics, liberal only in the support of specific issues, or even "regular." They were not even abnormally good men, just plain members of society with conventional virtues and "weaknesses" like anybody else. It seems that when the nature of the true poet is coupled with an intellect of unusually broad human sympathies and perceptions you get a poet whose integrity is not compromised by compliance with the little orderly ways of the world. His convictions and perceptions are so deep and secure that he need not celebrate them in any kind of overt revolt. He is above the antics of vanity. Being aware of the cruelties of society, he recognizes them as expressions of humanity as it is, knows that if they are corrected in one guise they will reappear in another, and foregoes the impulse to reform. Apparently the greatest poets are content to paint exactly what they see, contributing nothing of moral judgment, but leaving their picture of the world to carry its own inference without comment. Chaucer and Shakespeare and Hardy were aware, more poignantly than most poets, of the foibles and fatal errors of individuals and of society. Yet

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they never raised their voices to the pitch of preaching, and social crimes which would have sent Shelley spinning round the empyrean they set down as a matter of fact, heated only by the quality of poetry, and frosted gently with a little satire. The naïve integrity of the poet they surely maintained, but bound up with almost universal tolerance, tolerance even of the stupidity which would deny it expression and life. What little we know of Shakespeare implies a simple, almost an ordinary man. It would be easy to say, in support of my general thesis, that there must have been other qualities and vicissitudes—foibles, bursts of passion, lurid entanglements—of which the record is not preserved. But, while still convinced that the intuitive perception of the poet must necessarily undercut all conventions and rational perceptions, I would prefer to admit that the greatest poets, in proportion that they are universal in understanding, need not for their integrity protest, either in action or verbal expression, against the enslavement of men which they observe around them. Let mere poets assert themselves through rebellion and reform. The gods are content to see.

Greene, in his *Repentance*, gives a fair picture of a certain turbulent type of young poet, not criminal or self-seeking in the ordinary sense but cynical, adventurous, resentful of the world, unable to conform: "Being at the University of Cambridge, I light among wags as lewd as myself, with whom I consumed the flower of my youth, who drew me to travel into Italy and Spain, in which places I saw and practiced such villainy as is abominable to declare. Thus by their counsel I sought to furnish myself with coin, which I procured by cunning sleights from my father and my friends, and my mother pampered me so long, and secretly helped me to the oil of angels; so that being then conversant with notable braggarts, boon-companions and ordinary spendthrifts, and practiced sundry superficial studies, I became as a scion grafted into the same stock, wherein I did absolutely partake of their nature and qualities. At my return into England, I ruffled out in my silks, in the habit of Malcontent, and seemed so discontent that no place would please me to abide in, nor no vocation cause me to stay myself in;

but after I had by degrees proceeded master of arts (1583), I left the University, and away to London, where—after I had continued a short time and driven myself out of credit with sundry of my friends—I became an author of plays and a penner of love-pamphlets, so that I soon grew famous in that quality, that who, for that trade, known so ordinary about London as Robin Greene? Young yet in years, though old in wickedness, . . . I grew so rooted in all mischief, that I had as great a delight in wickedness as sundry have in godliness, and as much felicity I took in villainy as others have in honesty."

Such evidence as there is argues that Shakespeare was ambitious for nothing so much as to establish himself as a perfectly conventional country gentleman. Having made money in the theatre, he bought the "New Place" in his home town, exactly as any burgher might have done, being new-rich on wool. And to clinch the matter he entailed the property in his will. The glover's boy wanted to be county people—like his mother—and that apparently was all. Against these mature choices, the youthful rumors of poaching and running away with strolling players are not very weighty. The only evidence we have of poet-like unconventionality in him was that of his fellow actor who recorded his shyness and dislike of the court.

Once in a wedding masque, written to be performed at court, Ben Jonson introduced a translation of a Roman epithalamium so filthy that the King, himself not squeamish, suppressed it.

Donne probably exceeded all poets, as he did most other men, in the abjectness and the life-long persistence of his suits and intrigues for place. Because of the unscrupulous extremity of his sycophancy through which he came uncommitted in his soul, he must be accredited with a stronger character, a more inflexible integrity than that of most men who, eschewing such methods as his, would doubtless be undermined, should they adopt them. The apparent self-abasement of one of the most brilliant men of his age seems a little horrible, yet withal a little funny. The picture of Donne on his knees is always baroque; and through all his

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desperate candor it is not difficult to detect across the years the curl of his lip as he prostrated himself before a fool like Sir Robert Drury, or a scoundrel like the Duke of Somerset. When the question of bread was no longer involved, he continued, partly desiring advancement, but mostly as a sort of game, those wrigglings and solicitations by which he kept close to the hearts of Kings James and Charles. It was the early cynic and satirist who did these things. The later devotee was not concerned with them one way or the other. Donne showed his independence in 1607 when, being in the utmost poverty, he refused to accept a benefice because of lurking scruples, perhaps Catholic ones. In 1614 his rise began when Somerset summoned him before James who had already accepted the dedication of his *Pseudo-Martyr* and who now "descended to a persuasion, almost to a solicitation of him, to enter into sacred orders." After a few days Donne laid before the King a statement of his "views and scruples," the King accepted them, and Donne returned to London to prepare himself for ordination. In 1624—Donne being meanwhile risen to the Deanship of St. Paul's—there was a general tremor over James I's tendency to go Catholic, and intelligence was whispered to the King that Donne, like many other preachers, had intimated a fear of this from the pulpit. James sent for the Dean who, not satisfied with the royal acceptance of his explanation, knelt before him and "desired that he might not rise till, as in like cases he always had from God, so he might from his Majesty, receive some assurance that he stood fair and clear in his opinion." And the King lifted him with his own hands and protested that he believed him, that he was an honest man, and that he believed he, Donne, loved him. Within the church Donne was probably more the object of intrigue than a practitioner of it. He being the most popular preacher in the Kingdom, his worthy colleagues used to make a habit of attending his services and humming loudly and derisively to the rhythm of his eloquence. In 1627 Charles I, being determined absolutely to dominate the church, was in conflict with Archbishop Abbot of Canterbury. Bishop Laud, who was jealous of Donne's popularity

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as a preacher, contrived to attend the King on one of the occasions when the Dean was to preach before him, and was quick to agree with Charles in the detection of sentiments favorable to Abbot's position. The King ordered Donne to produce a copy of the sermon, which he did after writing nervously here and there for support. At the same time Laud tried further to poison Charles against Donne by showing him copies of the early, licentious poems which had long before been circulated in manuscript. Charles apparently was not shocked, for the whole incident passed off harmlessly enough. In 1630, a year before his death, we find Donne still busy at preferment letters, now on behalf of his son, George.

Milton was the first of what I have called the Great Revolutionaries, and flung himself passionately into the progressive movement of his time, or that aspect of it which particularly concerned him, namely the liberation of conscience from the establishment. At Cambridge Milton was "a severe student, of a nice and haughty temper, and jealous of constraint or control." He was one of the last university students in England to receive corporal punishment, and was suspended for a year on account of a quarrel with his tutor who tried to coerce him into the scholastic routine. His father had intended him for orders, but by the time he got his M.A., when he was twenty-four, he had no desire to enter the ministry, "perceiving what tyranny had entered the church . . . must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal." Thereupon he calmly defied all common sense and lived for five years in the country at Horton, supported by the generous tolerance of his father the scrivener, ruminating upon some ephemeral great work he felt himself destined to perform. At the end of this period he took a casual year in Italy, where he was fearlessly outspoken in his Protestantism and "received some coolness at Rome." Even amid the tumult of civil war, his volcanic pamphlet on divorce made a loud scandal. From his forty-second to his fifty-third year he deliberately prostituted his literary talent to the cause of the Commonwealth, being officially Latin Secretary and unofficially a sort of pam-

phleteer extraordinary and controversialist with the world at large. His most famous battle was that with Salmasius who, at the instance of Charles II, launched the *Defensio Regis* against the Parliament. Milton, in the *Defensio Populi*, exceeded Salmasius in vituperation, and flattered himself with the death of his rival which occurred two years later. Milton's miscellaneous duties took all of his time, and he deliberately sacrificed his eyesight to the cause. He stuck to his guns to the last, refusing to accredit the imminence of the Restoration, and continuing to launch pamphlets insulting Charles II to the moment of his landing in May, 1660. Thereupon, coerced by friends, he did leave his house and hid with a friend in the City until the passage of the Act of Oblivion. From this he was not excepted, partly through the efforts of Marvell and Davenant, and partly perhaps because of his political insignificance. Two of his books, however, were burned by the Hangman. In the autumn of 1660 he was for a time in the custody of a Sergeant-at-Arms, being discharged on December 15, when he stood up for his rights against his captor, refusing to pay an overcharge which that official had thought he could extort.

Marvell seems to have been a politician who, in turbulent times, had seldom any uncompromising convictions or any political axe to grind, other than a commendable desire to do his duty and hold his job. When he did have opinions, as seems to have been the case both at the beginning and end of his life, he was fearless enough in expressing them. While at Cambridge he went momentarily Catholic, joining what was the contemporary radical movement, and fled to London, taking refuge in one of the houses of the "Jesuits." His father, however, pursued him, caught him in a bookshop, persuaded him of his error and to return to the University. Much later, under Charles II, when he was in Parliament and an authority on the English Constitution, he grew worried by signs of arbitrary authority both in Church and State, and caused a great stir by publishing anonymously *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England*. In 1675 he wrote a bold mock King's speech, a savage burlesque of Charles's, and had it left anonym-

mously on the benches in Parliament. Later he openly satirized both the King and Prince Rupert, and for some unknown reason not only got away with it but retained the royal affection of both.

During the Civil Wars Butler lived comfortably under the patronage of Sir Samuel Luke, Puritan and Cromwell's Scoutmaster for Bedfordshire. And all the time Butler was writing *Hudibras* as a lampoon of his benefactor. At the Restoration it was published and became immensely popular at court, the King being notoriously delighted with it. Yet Butler, though penniless, was rewarded neither by royalty nor nobility, the reason being given that he had disqualified himself by his infidelity to his former patron.

The libertinism of the Restoration court was only the mode of the day, and its practice among the "mob of gentlemen who rhymed with ease" was no evidence of poetic unconventionality. The following incident, for instance, narrated by Johnson and involving two clever poetasters who have crept into the anthologies, seems only tawdry and banal, revealing no poet-like quality except possibly the vanity and egotism implicit in the act of exhibitionism: "Sackville, who was then Lord Buckhurst, with Sir Charles Sedley and Sir Thomas Ogle, got drunk at the Cock in Bow-Street by Covent-garden, and, going into the balcony, exposed themselves to the populace in very indecent postures. At last, as they grew warmer, Sedley stood forth naked, and harangued the populace in such profane language, that the public indignation was awakened; the crowd attempted to force the door, and, being repulsed, drove in the performers with stones, and broke the windows of the house. . . . For this misdemeanour they were indicted, and Sedley was fined five hundred pounds." Sedley was at this time the favorite of Charles II. Subsequently he repented and became a serious-minded public servant.

Johnson leaves no doubt as to Dryden's sycophancy: ". . . in the meanness and servility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperors were deified, he has ever been equalled. . . ." But Johnson, as we have seen, was prejudiced against the pat-

ronage system, and before discarding Dryden for a scheming scoundrel it would be well to weigh the evidence. In 1659 Dryden, then twenty-eight, published the excellent *Heroic Stanzas* on the death of Cromwell. A year later he had *Astrea Redux* ready for Charles II on his Restoration, and less than a year later a *Panegyric* on the occasion of his coronation. There is the unsavory story that Dryden, being jealous of Creech for his popular translation of Lucretius, induced him to try a Horace, knowing that he would fail and thereby lose his reputation, which in fact occurred. Dryden's thoroughness in using the patronage system appeared in his separate dedications of the three parts of his *Virgil*, aiming thus to enjoy a triple benefit: the *Pastorals* to Lord Clifford, the *Georgics* to the Earl of Chesterfield, and the *Æneid* to the Earl of Mulgrave. But in the same connection it must be remembered that Dryden, being out of favor with King William for religious reasons, refused the urgent request of Tonson, his publisher, to dedicate the whole *Virgil* to the King—whereupon Tonson took pains to "aggravate the nose of Æneas in the plates into a sufficient resemblance of . . . the Deliverer's countenance." The secret of Dryden's integrity or lack of it is to be found in this same matter of religion. The background is that Dryden was always a Tory, and that in 1682, in the *Religio Laici*, he had defended the Church of England against the Dissenters, thus announcing himself as in favor generally of authority in religion. On the accession of the Catholic James II his pension was taken away; then he went conveniently Catholic; then his pension was restored. That is the supposedly sordid sequence of facts. On the other hand it must be remembered that the pension was only £100, and that Dorset, Lord Chamberlain under James, after officially withdrawing it, remitted part or all of it from his own pocket. Also Dryden, having gone over to the Church, did not recant at the Revolution, but stuck to his faith not only at the cost of both his pensions but of his laurel and general influence as well. The explanation of his "apostacy" under James seems to be that he had already been converted to Catholicism and merely chose the opportune moment to

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announce the fact. If he had been merely opportunist he would, at the Revolution, have been reconverted to Protestantism.

Swift inaugurated his practice of anonymity in 1701 when he was thirty-four, with the learned political treatise, *Dissentions in Athens and Rome*. In 1704 he published the *Tale of the Tub* which caused a great scandal and, being accredited to him, established a clerical prejudice against him which later cost him a bishopric. In 1710 when he was forty-three and settled as a prelate in Ireland he first entered into public affairs, and in 1712 he leaped into authority and acclaim with the *Conduct of the Allies*, a paper in which it was shown that the war against Louis XIV, theretofore popular, was being needlessly prolonged "to fill the pockets of Marlborough." Swift was now much courted and had great influence in the disposition of patronage. He claimed for himself, and justly, some virtue as a Tory in interposing to keep in office the talented literary Whigs, Addison and Congreve. In 1714 he published *The Publick Spirit of the Whigs*, anonymously of course, and so provoked the Scotch Lords that they obtained from the Queen a proclamation offering £300 reward for the discovery of the author. From this disagreeable situation Swift later related that he was "secured by a sleight" so effective that before long the Scotch were soliciting his friendship. But the death of the Queen, and the immediate triumph of the Whigs, ended his *annus mirabilis* of authority and he retired for good to his deanery in Ireland. By an exhibition of firmness, piety, strict rectitude and an assumption of Irish patriotism, he soon established himself in the respect and affection of his people; and for the thirty years of his ministry exemplified in his own conduct toward them that meticulous performance of duty, the insistence on which on the part of others and in little things so often irritated his associates. Hating the Irish people, he threw all of his ability and force into championing them, usually against his interest and sometimes to his great danger. His most famous gesture was in the Drapier Letters. There being a scarcity of copper in Ireland, one Wood obtained a royal patent to issue £180,000

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of halfpence and farthings. Swift, discovering that the new copper currency was to be debased, exposed the plot in letters signed "M. B. Drapier," and thereby exposed himself to criminal prosecution for obstructing a royal patent. He was suspected, but the Grand Jury, in spite of bullying at the instance of the crown prosecutors, refused to bring in a bill against him. There was in fact no evidence, and the Privy Council offered a reward of £300 for the discovery of the author of the fourth letter. Swift had entrusted to his butler the delivery of his manuscripts to the printer, and immediately after the proclamation of reward the man disappeared for the night and part of the next day. When he appeared Swift immediately fired him, saying, "I know that my life is in your hands, and I will not bear, out of fear, either your insolence or negligence." The man remained loyal, and when the term set for the reward was ended, Swift took him back, summoned the household into his presence, and informed them that this was no longer Robert the butler but Mr. Blakeney, verger of St. Patrick's. The essential daring with which Swift did what he wanted, playing always along the edge of detection yet never falling into it, appeared in his passage with one Bettesworth, an M. P. and distinguished lawyer given to insulting the clergy. In a satirical poem on the Presbyterians, Swift incidentally tossed off a stricture on Bettesworth which brought that gentleman into contempt and cost him, by his later declaration in Parliament, a practice worth £1200 a year. When the poem appeared Bettesworth confronted Swift and demanded if he was the author. "Mr. Bettesworth," answered the Dean, "I was in my youth acquainted with great lawyers, who, knowing my disposition to satire, advised me, that, if any scoundrel or blockhead whom I had lampooned should ask, 'Are you the author of this paper?' I should tell them that I was not the author; and therefore I tell you, Mr. Bettesworth, that I am not the author of these lines."

Despite the shamelessness of Pope's intrigues of vanity, there was a salutary integrity in him that could not be bought. When the *Iliad* was in process and Pope needed money Lord Halifax angled for the dedication, holding out the prospect

of setting up Pope comfortably for life. In the midst of the polite negotiations, his Lordship invited the poet to read to him from the manuscript, Addison, Congreve and Garth being also present. At four or five points his Lordship stopped Pope very politely, saying there was "something in that passage" that did not quite please him, and suggested that Pope mark the place and consider it at his leisure. On the way home Pope said to Garth that he was at a loss what to make of such vague criticism. Garth, who knew Halifax well, laughed and said to make nothing of it. Some time later Pope read to his Lordship the same passages unaltered, saying that he hoped he would now find the objections removed. "His Lordship," says Pope, "was extremely pleased with them, and cried out, 'Ay, now they are perfectly right: nothing can be better.'" Pope gradually grew chillier toward Halifax's advances, being, in Johnson's phrase, "less eager of money than Halifax of praise." And so the projected patronage came to nothing. Pope once refused a government pension of £300, because he was unwilling to be beholden to either political party.

In Johnson's vivid portrait of Savage we see, in extreme caricature, the poet baffled and badgered in a world to no corner of which he is able to adapt himself. Cut off by poverty from the expression of his native generous impulses, as well as from the most elementary comforts and even the circumstances congenial to composition, soured by the knowledge of illegitimacy, and excluded by his mother from the society in which he instinctively belonged, the poet's conceit in him, driven by unquenchable vitality, was forced to turn for expression to excess of dissipation, display and the pathetic pride of poverty. His inability or unwillingness to conform to the elementary rules of conduct appeared in his behavior while the guest of Lord Tyrconnel, who entertained him and gave him the full liberty of his house for two years, the longest haven of Savage's career. Though enjoying a comfortable allowance at this time, he was so accustomed to live by shifts that he could not forego the habit. It was his practice "to enter a tavern with any company that proposed it, drink the most expensive wines with great profusion, and

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when the reckoning was demanded to be without money: if, as it often happened, his company were willing to defray his part, the affair ended, without any ill consequences; but, if they were refractory, and expected that the wine should be paid for by him that drank it, his method of composition was, to take them with him to his own apartment" (in Lord Tyrconnel's house), "assume the government of the house, and order the butler in an imperious manner to set the best wine in the cellar before the company, who often drank till they forgot the respect due to the house in which they were entertained, indulged themselves in the utmost extravagance of merriment, practiced the most licentious frolics, and committed all the outrages of drunkenness." Finally Lord Tyrconnel, having presented Savage with "a collection of valuable books, stamped with his own arms, . . . had the mortification to see them in a short time exposed to sale upon the stalls, it being usual with Mr. Savage, when he wanted a small sum, to take his books to the pawn-broker." This was the last straw with Lord Tyrconnel, and shortly after this occasion he ejected his strange guest from his house. On one occasion Savage published proposals for printing his works by subscription, and received numerous contributions. But since the sums naturally came in in small amounts, he was unable to husband them, spending each subscription in some tavern as soon as he received it; and so the book never appeared. The essential and tragic integrity of Savage was most apparent in his tortured and uncompromising touchiness about being condescended to. Though he considered a reminder of a debt or a refusal to lend as a personal insult, yet he many times chose the prospect of starvation to receiving anything not offered with proper dignity or where his hyper-sensitiveness was able to detect in the gift a grain of condescension. After the quarrel with Lord Tyrconnel, being ragged and hungry, he did not scruple to demand that his allowance be restored, but refused to seize any opportunity to seek a personal reconciliation, continuing to treat his former patron with haughty and contemptuous superiority. During this same period a man left him a message to the effect that he desired to see him at

about nine the next morning, intending, as Savage well knew, to assist him. But because his friend had presumed to prescribe the hour of his attendance, Savage refused to accept the invitation and rejected the intended help. On a later occasion, his clothes being in shreds, he received notice that some clothing and linen had been left for him at a certain coffee-house; but because the offer "was made with some neglect of ceremonies," Savage "refused the present, and declined to enter the house till the clothes that had been designed for him were taken away." Near the end of his life, when a subscription had been raised to send him into Wales that he might finish a play, the subscribers, intending to clothe him, instead of allowing him to send for a tailor to fit him, themselves proposed to summon the tailor and then to consult among themselves how they should equip him. This threw him into "agonies of rage," and he rejected the tailoring at once, though it is suspected that in this case he later relented. At length he went to Wales and on the way back was arrested in Bristol for debt. Installed in Newgate Prison he immediately and characteristically wrote a satire on his late friends who had entertained him in Bristol, calling it "London and Bristol Delineated," and sent it to a friend in London, announcing his intention to publish the satire over his own name but enjoining his correspondent to silence in the matter. The latter replied, cautioning him against publishing it, at least over his name, and stating that he could not reconcile Savage's desire for secrecy with his intention to proclaim the poem his own on its appearance. Savage's retort—nearly or quite the last letter he ever wrote—shows the touchy pomposity, sensitive pride and unnecessary defiance that were the last resources of his tortured and now hysterical integrity: "I received yours this morning; and not without a little surprise at the contents. To answer a question with a question, you ask me about London and Bristol, why will I add delineated? Why did Mr. Woolaston add the same word to his Religion of Nature? I suppose that it was his will and pleasure to add it in his case; and it is mine to do so in my own. You are pleased to tell me, that you understand not why secrecy is enjoined, and

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yet I intend to set my name to it. My answer is—I have my private reasons, which I am not obliged to explain to any one. You doubt my friend Mr. S—— would not approve of it—and what is it to me whether he does or not? Do you imagine that Mr. S—— is to dictate to me? If any man who calls himself my friend should assume such an air, I would spurn at his friendship with contempt. You say, I seem to think so by not letting him know it—And suppose I do, what then? Perhaps I can give reasons for that disapprobation, very foreign from what you would imagine. You go on in saying, Suppose I should not put my name to it—My answer is, that I will not suppose any such thing, being determined to the contrary; neither, Sir, would I have you suppose, that I applied to you for want of another press: nor would I have you imagine, that I owe Mr. S—— obligations which I do not."

During the unpopularity of the government following the naval defeat at Minorca, Mallet was secretly employed in its defense and performed the most infamous act I have found accredited to a poet. Over the signature of "Plain Man" he wrote a letter imputing cowardice to the able and brave admiral, Byng, which ruse was so far successful that Byng was executed and Mallet received a pension, said to have been "very large." By the will of the Duke of Marlborough, £1000 was left to Mallet and Glover to write a life of the Duke. There was a condition that the manuscript should be submitted to Lord Chesterfield, which caused Glover to reject the commission, Mallet then receiving the entire £1000 and a further pension from the young Duke. In order to maintain the last he put up a show of always being busy on the biography; but he never wrote a line of it.

Gray would not hear of accepting the laureateship, which was proffered to him on Cibber's death.

At Dublin University Goldsmith's tutor struck him before a group of friends, whereupon Goldsmith quit the university and wandered about the country, ragged and penniless, until his older brother Henry captured him and carried him back to continue his education.

Akenside deserves much credit for the originality and

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independence of his political views that were ahead of his time. Although born well back in the Age of Reason, 1721, he was, at least in opinion, a revolutionary, and offers the first instance of that Liberality which characterized most of the great romantic poets who followed him.

Shenstone's life was unstained by moral or political indiscretion.

Cowper decisively rejected the laureateship: "It would be a leaden extinguisher on my genius, and I should never more produce a line worth reading."

Such laws, conventions and other limitations on conduct as came to Blake's attention excited his scorn. But fortunately for him, life, both in theory and in practice, occurred in the mind—"thought is act"—and the many and flagrant sins which, in his own view, he committed brought no more obloquy on his head than a reputation for being queer or perhaps a little mad. He confessed gaily to many "murders" and "adulteries," but they seem to have taken place in the realm of the spirit, for no crime of his ever came to the attention of the police, and the evidence is all against his ever having been unfaithful to his wife. But there is no doubt that Blake was fiercely independent. When he was in his thirties he and his friends Stothard and Ogleby, being on a sailing and sketching expedition on the Medway, were taken by some soldiers in the suspicious occupation of map-making, and detained as possible French spies, until identified. This bit of stupidity was probably the beginning of Blake's life-long hatred of soldiers, and likewise for his swing, which occurred in 1790, not long after to the radical group that included Tom Paine, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Doctor Priestly. This phase in turn ended with the September massacres which led him to conclude that there was no hope of human salvation by political means. Thereafter he devoted himself exclusively to the spiritual life, becoming a pacifist and indifferent alike to radical and reactionary causes. He blamed Jesus for meddling in public affairs and letting himself be crucified, for he—Jesus—"had no business in such matters."

When Burns was making his rounds as Excise Gauger he

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habitually warned the moonshiners by letting his collie dog, Thurlow, run a quarter of a mile or so ahead of him. There was a notorious stiller and drunkard known as Auld Kate, whose brew was popular in the neighborhood. One day Burns stuck his head in the door and called, "Kate, is it *fou'* ye are? *Dinna ye ken* that the supervisor and I'll be on ye in forty minutes mair?"

Wordsworth goes down in literary history as a notorious turn-coat, because of his shift from radical to reactionary politics which took place *overtly* in his early thirties. It has been said that he combined the qualities of a great poet and a country attorney. For the last thirty-five years of his life he did indeed exhibit the qualities of the latter. But the aspect of his psychology that led him to this contraction of scope was at the outset honest and dignified, and the struggle between the two sides of his nature was fraught not only with tragedy but also with his best poetry. Wordsworth was dual in the largest sense. One side of him was at once a mystic and a social idealist, a great imagination that had a vision of human society as it *ought to be*, and *was perfectly willing, while the vision held, to run the danger of death in pursuit of it*. But over against the mystic idealist was the actualist, the observer of the pragmatic aspect of things whose function was to keep this idealism within the realm of practicability. It is this practicability of Wordsworth that is, I think, most generally misunderstood. *Practical in the ordinary, socially and physically self-protective sense, he certainly was not*, at least not until he had a large family to support and his moral ideas had already and independently shifted into alignment with conservatism. Wordsworth's practicality, throughout his poetic period, was of a sort immediately identified with his idealism. It was a practicality *not for himself but for the world*. He hated tyranny and suffering, and had a vision of human liberty identified with the agenda of the French Revolution. But as soon as he saw with his deepest perceptions that the new "liberty" was becoming merely another sort of tyranny, then he negated the vision as fearlessly and *with as little practical concern for himself* as he had affirmed it before. Wordsworth was in-

dependent from the outset. At Cambridge he was not impressed by the ambitions, jealousies and triumphs of university life, kept himself aloof from other students, and was generally considered mad. During his occasional moments of misgiving about his practical outlook, and seeing everybody else concerned for theirs, he would walk out and commune with nature, and feel reassured. His liberalism awoke in 1791 when, being twenty-one and possessed of some £20 capital, he went to France for a year's residence in Orleans and Blois. He went over to the Revolution both in theory and in act. He eschewed the Anglican church, for which his family had destined him, became an outspoken Republican, and in real agony of spirit lost faith in the excellence of his own country. For the next ten years he was identified with the radical English Jacobins who opposed the war with France, and frankly wanted to make England a republic. He listened to the liberal sermons of Doctor Fawcett, visited the radical Basil Montague in London, dined frequently with Nicholson where Godwin was also a frequent guest, and had for publisher of his first two books Joseph Johnson, who was general publisher to the radicals—Doctor Priestley, Horne, Tooke, Mary Wollstonecraft—and in whose bookshop Godwin, Paine and Blake habitually met. After England declared war on France he "exulted in English defeats and sat silent in churches where prayers were said for English victories"—a course of conduct which in his later years he assiduously concealed. By 1793 he was in such bad odor with his family that Doctor Cookson, with whom his sister Dorothy was staying, refused to allow him to see her. On the other hand his failure in that year to publish his powerful reply to Bishop Watson's attack on the French Revolution is held up as a prize case of his supposed pusillanimity. Harper thinks he visited France earlier in this same 1793, and if he did, it may be that his experiences there began to awaken his pragmatic skepticism and supplied the valid excuse for withholding his revolutionary pamphlet from publication. In Harper's supposition his visit to Paris in 1793 was assisted by friends in the ousted Girondist faction and his motive was to visit Annette Vallon. According

to this view, he got no farther than Paris, where he witnessed the beheading of Gorges, a Girondist deputy, and whence, being in constant danger of arrest and execution as an English spy, he returned home without seeing Annette. If this visit occurred it is likely that the seeds of disillusion in the French Revolution were sown in the spectacle of terror, the persecution of the party he had espoused, and the actual sight of the execution of a man he had probably known personally. But if his doubts date from this time they did not appear in any overt change of attitude for six or seven years more. In 1797, when he settled with Dorothy at Alfoxden, he brought with him the reputation of a Revolutionary. Coleridge, living at Nether Stowey, four miles away, wrote to a friend, "You can not conceive the tumult, calumnies, and apparatus of threatened persecutions, which the event" of Wordsworth's arrival at Alfoxden "has occasioned round about us." Wordsworth's and Coleridge's principal menace to the Kingdom seems to have lain in the fact that they dressed and acted differently from respectable people. Of the alarm occasioned by Wordsworth's visit to Coleridge in Nether Stowey, Cottle wrote: "The wiseacres of the village had, it seems, made Mr. Wordsworth the subject of their serious conversation. One said that 'he had seen him wander about by night and look rather strangely at the moon! and then he roamed over the hills like a partridge.' Another said, 'he had heard him mutter, as he walked, in some outlandish brogue, that nobody could understand.'" (Perhaps Wordsworth was practicing his French.) At a party of Poole's the host asked his cousin Penelope to sing for Coleridge and Wordsworth "Come, ever-smiling Liberty," but she sang something else instead because, "I knew what they meant by *their* liberty." The inhabitants of Alfoxden seem to have been more practical in their defenses against the satanic invader. When the famous revolutionist John Thelwall visited Wordsworth for a few days, some one in the neighborhood notified the authorities that disaffected persons were gathering thereabouts, and a government spy was sent down to observe them. Furthermore, the mother of the absent heir who had nominally leased the Alfoxden house to Wordsworth, being

privy to the hue and cry, gave Wordsworth notice to quit at the end of his year's lease. Certainly there was at this time no overt back-sliding by Wordsworth or prudent adaptation to general opinion. The change began to show itself about 1800 when he saw the French Republic, originally the creation of the Spirit of Liberty in man, changed into a conquering and imperialistic machine. The first evidence of change was growing intimacy with aristocrats whom he would once have stigmatized as tyrants, and his acceptance of patronage from them. His neighbor Sir George Beaumont became his lifelong friend. Lord Lonsdale became his economic mainstay. Abandoning his old grudge against Toryism and English militarism, he now began to attack the workhouse and the new industrialism generally, envisaging the safety of England in the old rural system which was, of course, at root the aristocratic system. By 1803 when England was threatened with invasion by the tyrant Napoleon, he was loudly patriotic and militaristic, composing a jingoistic sonnet prophesying the slaughter of the French, and himself joining the local volunteers and drilling with them. By 1812 he was opposing a free press and, dreading disorder, favored an armed force over the land to keep things in *status quo*. In 1818 he achieved his final degradation, brazenly trying to manipulate the local franchise so as to elect the Tory candidate, his friend and patron Lord Lonsdale. He wrote Lonsdale a letter offering to purchase a piece of land which could then be parcelled out to twelve freeholders, thus qualifying them to vote—"gentlemen, my friends, and relations—who could be depended upon." The plan was carried out and thus Wordsworth, either with his own or Lord Lonsdale's money, bought votes. (The Whigs won the election.) In the same year, 1818, "as a seal and sign of social rank, and in recognition of his services to the Tory party," he was appointed Justice of the Peace. By this time his poetic integrity was long dead and his psychology was not far from that of a "country attorney." But the shift, I submit, had been intellectually honest. The pragmatic philosopher—honorable father to the "country attorney"—finally overcame the mystic, the idealist and the poet, but not without a strug-

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gle which is memorable in the history of the poets for having produced what of consequence Wordsworth contributed. In about 1793 when he began to see the French Revolution as a failure, a bloody escapade which had brought suffering instead of liberty to mankind, he entered upon seven years of agony in which his idealism slowly succumbed to his pragmatic perceptions. Despairing of mankind in society, he secretly gave over his old political convictions but as yet he adopted no others in their place. Instead he transferred his faith to man as an individual and, transcending the world of politics, lived companioned by the simple honesty of nature wherein all men were united and at peace. His poetic integrity remained and he produced his great work. Then, soon after 1800, the struggle lessened, the pragmatic attitude emerged master of his mind and, strengthened by the presence of a family to feed, hardened into work-a-day practicality, conservatism in politics, the attitude of the country attorney. The conceit of the great poet withered into the puttering vanity which was Wordsworth of his last thirty-five years, the Wordsworth who denied many times that the earlier mystic, idealist and poet had ever existed.

Coleridge on the whole had not so much character as a jelly. He had not even a wobbling firmness, only a worry and a wish to be firm. He had only a scintilla of control in the matter of alcohol and laudanum, and he gave over his political liberalism without any of the torturing misgivings that Wordsworth suffered. He was what I called earlier a "Child Poet" of the most extreme variety. When he was fifteen and a student at Christ's Hospital, having just read Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, he suddenly proclaimed himself an infidel and had the effrontery to argue against the violent Christian dogma of the redoubtable headmaster, the Reverend James Boyer. For this inadvertence he received the most violent flogging of his life. During his second year in Cambridge, 1792, he went radical, both in politics and religion. He read nothing but political pamphlets—which he automatically got by heart and recited in his rooms to the wonderment of the young radicals who habitually assembled there. During the university trial of one Frend

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for having published a pamphlet against the established Church, Coleridge, when some words were said in the defendant's behalf, burst into loud, spontaneous clapping for which he received a severe reprimand. The following year he departed for a realm more congenial than politics, that of Utopia. He and Southey devised a scheme of colonial communism which they called Pantisocracy. Coleridge's function was to dream warmly of the prospect and to guarantee his adherence by marrying Sarah Fricker, sister of Southey's wife and of the wife of a third of the Pantisocrats. After the scheme failed and Coleridge, back at Cambridge, found himself ridiculed, he quickly forgot the plan, "liberty," "freedom" and the French Revolution. While Wordsworth was still holding off from accepting the kindly and reactionary patronage of Sir George Beaumont, and so admitting defeat, Coleridge's "surrender to the new influence was precipitate and abject."

Scott solemnly advised the eighteen-year-old Shelley to restrain his enthusiasm lest it "engender a contempt for the ordinary business of the world and unfit you for the useful domestic virtues which depend greatly on our not exalting our feelings above the temper of well-ordered and well-educated society."

Landor said that the greatest poets, such as Wordsworth, were always good men. He hated Byron and his works and avoided both. He snubbed Shelley in Pisa on account of the scandal. Yet he was himself a fair rival of either of these for unconventional independence. He was fired from Rugby for fighting, and from Oxford for firing a gun through a Tory's door. He quarrelled with his father and left home "forever." He was a violent revolutionary, even after he had lost faith in the French Revolution. He wrote ardently for the Whig papers, and equipped out of his own pocket and led a thousand volunteers to aid in the Spanish revolt, though the unit did not see action. But all of this was more an aspect of Landor's indiscriminate pugnacity than the expression of what would today be called a revolutionary spirit. He hated the masses. His theory of liberty was that every human being should "enjoy his reason for the promotion

of his happiness." But to him "every human being" meant only those who were capable, in his view, of "enjoying their reason," namely the upper classes, or at least the educated ones; and he was in practice so anti-democratic that he took pride in never voting. Whatever Landor was or was not, he was surely independent. When a Commission was carrying on a "delicate investigation" into the character and behavior of Queen Caroline, Landor was invited to give confidential testimony and replied indignantly: "Her Royal Highness is my enemy; she has deeply injured me" (referring to one of his typical neighborly brawls when they were living in adjoining villas on Lake Como), "therefore I can say nothing against her, and I never will." Shortly before this incident George IV had somewhat pointedly invited him to dinner, but Landor reported that "I declined the honor on the plea that I had an attack of quinsy. I always have quinsy when royal people ask me to dinner"—laughing immoderately.

Hunt was fined £1000 for calling the Prince Regent a "fat Adonis of fifty." When Shelley started to raise his fine by subscription, Hunt had the independence to refuse the kindness.

Contrary to the general opinion and to his own *conscious* wishes, Byron was probably at heart a conventional man, a nature, that is, who was sensitive to society around him and desired its good opinion as crystallized in the ordinary standards of brave and gentlemanly conduct. Upon this base, from which he was never able wholly to remove himself, there arose the complicated structure of his personality. To begin with, he had an inferiority complex on two scores: instinctively a soldier, he was estopped from a military career by his lameness; instinctively a conventional man and so desiring to play the rôle of a proper nobleman, he realized that *au fond* he was in fact not quite a gentleman, being born only remotely to the manor. The consequent inferiority complex sought compensation in a heightening of his pride and a tendency to parade his own importance before the world, when necessary to the point of shocking it in violation and defiance of those very principles of conduct to which he

secretly desired, but knew he was not quite able, to conform. To this psychopathic arrogance was added the genuine scorn of a superb intellect for the opinions of society and the genuine conceit of the poet turned into vanity by the inferiority complex. Add further to this *mélange* a dominant histrionic necessity, a definitely sadistic instinct and a nervous organization abnormally violent and courageous, and you get Byron. There is not much evidence in his life of anything that might be called character. During his boyhood Elizabeth Pigor wrote to her brother: "How can you ask if Lord Byron is going to visit the Highlands this summer? Why, don't you know that he never knows his own mind for ten minutes together?" The only consistency he displayed was in the matter of keeping thin, and his behavior in that case was directed by vanity. He took his seat in the House of Lords at twenty-one. His maiden speech was moderately successful, his own professed opinion of it being that it was a good advertisement of his poetry. Conventional though Byron was at heart, he was fearless and scornful of expediency, and he would never retract. In 1812, at the height of his social popularity, Lady Caroline Lamb made a spectacle at a ball at Carleton House by cutting herself because of Byron's neglect of her. The Prince Regent was much annoyed but Byron went home, wrote and published anonymously *Lines to a Lady Weeping*. Two years later when the Prince Regent's anger and the popular furor had quieted down, he blandly inserted the lines in the second edition of the *Corsair*; the Prince again fumed; gossip and the press rattled; Byron was hounded out of London; and his drawing-room popularity declined from that date.

For Shelley the conventions of thought or action, public or private, were negligible against his own integrity, and outside of the field of literary criticism he was practically unaware of the opinions of men. He was, in consequence, an outcast from society, a hunted rebel in politics, a wild and pure spirit who, in his utter honesty and courage, could never grasp the worldly necessity for his persecution. At Eton he was an amiable and generous boy, but his fiery chemical experiments were a trial to his preceptors. On one oc-

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casion he blew up part of the paling round the school with gunpowder, and on another blew off the lid of his desk during school hours. His originality began to take a more ominous turn at Oxford. In February of his freshman year he published a seven-page pamphlet on *The Necessity of Atheism*, directing that it be sent to all Bishops of the Kingdom, all Heads of Colleges at Oxford, the Vice-Chancellor and other dignitaries. He was also guilty of pasting up atheistical squibs on the chapel door of his college, University. The pamphlet was on public sale for twenty minutes before sound members of the faculty were able to suppress the dangerous thing and collect and burn all copies of it but one. Poor, sick, harassed Timothy Shelley, *père*, was sent for, Bysshe and his co-conspirator Hogg were arraigned before the Master and Fellows of the College, and duly expelled (compare the sentimental marble replique of Shelley's corpse now set up at University College). Shelley in fact hated to leave Oxford, having intended to devote six or seven years to study there. But he put on a bold front: just before the expulsion he and Hogg swaggered up and down the quadrangle extravagantly dressed; in the subsequent struggle with his father he proposed to give up his inheritance; and he—essentially a religious poet—assumed the title of “atheist” as “a word of abuse to stop discussion, a threat to intimidate the wise and good.” From that time Shelley accepted the challenge of the world. A year later his father and the Duke of Norfolk tried to persuade him to stand for Parliament, but after an interview with the duke he contemptuously refused. When he was twenty he took his little wife, Harriet, along with her sister Eliza, to Ireland, on a two months’ proselyting trip to liberalize the Irish mind, and in a letter from there to his spiritual paramour, Miss Hitchener, he styled himself the “self-constituted steward of universal happiness.” He was amazed when the venture got no tangible results, and returned to England much cast down. While living at Lynmouth he used to row or wade out into the ocean and drop corked bottles or air-tight boxes containing glad messages of liberty to mankind. And in the improprieties of his private

conduct he was as outrageous and as innocent. While living at Tanyralt, Wales, in 1813, he discovered that many of the sheep of Robin Pant Evan, a rough farmer, which grazed in the pasture above his cottage, were "beset by scab or other disease," which so far aroused his humanitarian sympathies that he began, gratuitously, with the pistols he always carried, to put them out of their misery, as a result of which, in the feud that followed, he was almost put out of his own. Back in London on the occasion of the Prince Regent's costly fête, he wrote a poem satirizing the Regent and threw copies of it into the carriages of those bound for the party. In 1815, at some village ball, he was expected to lead out a popular belle in the dance, but instead he tenderly invited the "object of all the virtuous scorn in the room." On another occasion he found an unfortunate woman lying on Hampstead Heath on a winter night, appealed to a neighboring householder to take her in and, being refused, prophesied that in the coming revolution this man's house would be burned. His naïveté in sexual and social matters was as great as in politics. In a letter written about this time to the egregious Miss Hitchener, he exclaimed, "Let us mingle our identities inseparably, and burst upon tyrants with the accumulated impetuosity of our acquirements and resolutions." During the elopement with Mary Godwin he was forever insisting that they bathe naked in some waterfall they were passing, in spite of Mary's protests about the driver and the lack of towels—"We shall dry ourselves on leaves." Much later, in Pisa, when Mary was entertaining guests at tea, Shelley obviously walked through the room naked and, hearing something said that interested him, paused to discuss it. He always wanted to bring up two children on a desert island, to see how astonished they would be at the spectacle of the world—but neither Harriet nor Mary seem to have agreed to this program. Toward the end of his short life there were indications of weariness and defeat. At Mary's wish he permitted his children to be baptized at St.-Giles-in-the-Fields Church, which he had specifically attacked in *Queen Mab*. He suspended his high-minded contributions to the support of his relentless father-in-law, Godwin. In his

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work, specifically *The Cenci*, he began to show an interest in men and society as they actually were.

Keats was one of the small group, probably containing Chaucer and Shakespeare, which I called the Great Conventionalists. In action he was thoroughly conventional, the only real evidence to the contrary being supplied by his major choice to be a poet. He was, withal, a fearless man, morally and physically. There was nothing of the conformist in him. What he did, in general and particular, he did because it was his own and not anybody else's way. He had no formulated general notions of "liberty" or "justice," but was purely particular and personal in his relations. If he saw a particular person or a particular kitten being bullied, somebody immediately got his nose punched, and "his indignation would have made the boldest grave; . . . they who had seen him under the influence of injustice and meanness of soul would not forget the expression of his features —the form of his visage was changed." But he had no time to launch beyond the particular occasion into causes and panaceas for mankind. His only sharp revelation of liberal feelings came near the end of his life when he was in Naples, on his way to Rome to die. The account is Severn's: "We went that evening to the San Carlo Theatre, and much admired the fine scene-painting, though the singing was not good, and the acting indifferent. We were particularly struck by the admirable painting or clever representation of two sentinels on the stage, one at either side. To our astonishment—an amazement which gave way to indignation—we saw at the end of the act, the painted sentries become suddenly animated and move about. They were, in fact, real men, and such was the debasement of the Neapolitan national character that this outrage was actually permitted to pass without indignant challenge. This gross instance of tyrannical despotism was more than either of us could stand, so we rose and forthwith left—though not till Keats had exclaimed in a frenzy, 'Severn, we'll go at once to Rome, for as I know that I shall not last long, it would make me die in anguish if I thought I was to be buried amid a people with such miserable political [aspiration? ].'"

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Emerson's personal life was mild enough; and he disliked cranks and reformers; yet he was an independent mind and more of a real rebel than most of them. At Harvard young Emerson recoiled at once from the "conventionally gay" undergraduates and the "conventionally grave" professors of the "juiceless learning of the curriculum." His real life was celebrated in a secret ritual when, on winter mornings, he would arise at four-thirty in his carpetless, curtainless room, break the ice in his pitcher, light the candle with flint and steel, and write the first jottings of the later essays. In a daze of family pressure he went through Divinity School, and accepted the pulpit of the Second Unitarian Church of Boston; but he resigned after three years, writing of the church in his Journal: "Forms remain, but the soul is well-nigh gone." He hated "official goodness," and was unable to be an "example." He was shy and ineffectual at funerals and official ministrations, and an old revolutionary soldier once rose up in a rage from his death-bed, saying that Emerson didn't understand the business of consolation. He spoke against slavery fearlessly when every church and almost every hall in Boston was closed to the subject. And when the Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1850, he actively joined the "underground railway" in angry protest against this repression of individual liberty. He built a den in his attic for any fugitive slave who passed through Concord, and from there he drove them in his covered wagon to South Acton to get the train for Canada. He spoke in Concord, Boston, Cambridge and country towns. "Volleys of hisses and catcalls drowned his words, but he stood quietly and waited for the noise to cease, then continued with perfect composure." Shortly after the war he had the temerity to lecture at the University of Virginia, where the students, wishing "to insult this Yankee, . . . laughed and talked" until at the end of half an hour he was forced to stop. But here as always his reaction was tolerant and original. "They are very brave down there," he said, "they say just what they think." During his last few years he settled into a quiet conservatism which was not so much a change of front as a phase of his descent into senile imbecility.

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Whittier was a thoroughly conventional man in his personal life and in his critical attitude—he found in some of the Waverley Novels a “tendency to subvert some of the purest principles of Christianity.” But politically he was a fearless evangelist of the most fire-eating sort, an Abolitionist at a time when it was far more dangerous to be one than it is to be a Communist today. After he had retired from public life he said, “I set a higher value on my name as appended to the Anti-Slavery Declaration than on the title page of my book.” But to a young man seeking advice he said, “My lad, if thou wouldest win success, join thyself to some popular but ignoble cause.” Though inflexible in his morality Whittier had in little things a quaint and child-like way of doing as he chose. When he was an old man a lady came to play and sing to him a poem of his which she had set. The verses went on interminably, and Whittier presently rose quietly and left the room, leaving the good lady still rendering.

Longfellow, the laureate of the domestic virtues, was in fact not a domestic man at all. He hated the classroom and the quiet life of Cambridge, and lived only in the hope of his next opportunity to travel, forever “pawing to get free his hinder parts” from the slough of academic duties.

Through the accident of being raised a gentleman in a society in which he was perpetually reminded that he was not born one, Poe grew up sour and against the world. However strongly he may have sometimes longed for peace, he was unable to pursue it to the compromising of his independence. He was first of all himself, a melancholy, tortured, lonely soul, bitterly perceptive of the hypocrisies and smugness of the comfortable world, and as indifferent to conventions and opinions as Shelley was, or Swinburne. He was all poet, which is to say that in the depths of his dark intellect he was honest with himself, and saw the world honestly, from his own dark bias. Whatever conventional gesture he undertook, he must do it with a sour turn. From the University of Virginia he must get fired for gambling and drinking. Presently he must run away and join the army, and compose a fantasy withal to account for his ab-

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sence. He must get himself fired from West Point for disobedience of orders. From every job he held he must get himself fired for some "irregularity." He was a shameless plagiarist and a master of misquotation for his own benefit. While he was editor of the *Evening Mirror* he did not scruple to use its columns to advertise for a better job. When he bought the *Broadway Journal* from Briggs and Bisco for \$50, Horace Greeley went on his note, and presently had to pay it. Years later Greeley said, "The autograph, I regret to say, remains on my hands, and is for sale at the first cost, despite the lapse of time and depreciation of our currency." Yet in all this outrageous behavior, even in his drunkenness and in his final affiancing of himself to a suspiciously rich widow, there is no real impeachment of Poe's proper integrity, which was poetic and literary. He stood alone against the great of his age and fearlessly attacked those who might have increased his own reputation. The only time Poe was guilty of disingenuousness and moral failure was when, in order to feed his family, he gave over his literary standards. When he was editing *The Southern Literary Messenger* he disliked Chivers's work and rejected it with no uncertain sarcasm. But ten years later, in 1845, he praised the identical work as "a marvel" in *The Broadway Journal*, and at the same time was trying to borrow money from Chivers!

Tennyson as a youth was a Liberal. Hearing of the passage of the Reform Bill, he led some of his brothers and sisters out into the night and began, riotously and improperly, to ring the bells of their father's church. At Cambridge he supported the Anti-Slavery Convention. When he was twenty-one he and Hallam went to the Pyrenees, carrying a purse they had collected for the insurgent allies of Torrijos, and had a secret meeting at the border with the leaders of the conspiracy. His great relief at setting foot on English soil after this expedition may mark the beginning of his conservative swing, though in his moral views he remained independent enough for about ten years more. He had the courage to reject his wealthy grandfather's proposition that he enter the church; the spark of defiance lasted

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long enough to produce the two or three great poems of the “ten silent years”; and the dying glow of it throughout his life was sufficient to make him wilful and crotchety and capable of the occasional tinctures of diluted originality which caused the safe and sane critics to find *Maud*, *Enoch Arden* and the *Idylls* “degenerate, subversive, atheistic, and immoral.” But Tennyson was either a timid man or lacking in the penetration of intellect to follow his own flashes of insight through to any independent viewpoint which should be permanently his own. Also he had the kind of complex—“inferiority” or “superiority,” as you wish—which, healthily aware that he was cut out to be a great man, must unhealthily keep that protective awareness always before him, so that it was all too easy for him to slide over into vanity and accept success and acclaim as substitutes for honest achievement to the extent of his faculties. Having moped through thirty-two more or less courageously independent years without public recognition of consequence, at the first blast of fame he rushed over gladly into the conservative camp and busied himself with giving the Victorian world what it wanted. As a result he became the most popular poet that ever lived, the complete prophet of his time, and probably the only poet with the faintest claim to greatness every one of whose “deepest” opinions and choices were irreproachably correct. He maintained that the stability of the nation depended on the sacredness of home life, and that patriotism was the first of virtues. He hesitated to undertake *The Holy Grail* lest it seem profane. Once, when a lady told him that Doctor Johnson “often stirred his lemonade with his finger, and that often dirty,” he was very angry for such a revelation of a great man and said of her that “the dirt is in her own heart.” He was “ignorant, fire-eating, and insular,” and did his best to get England into war with Napoleon III. As laureate he took a domestic, “almost matriarchal” view of the British Empire, and celebrated the interests of the importers of colonial, and especially Indian, produce. He enjoyed announcing impressively his views on government as follows: “I am of the same politics as Shakespeare, Bacon, and every sane man”—and there was nothing

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more to say, for the implication always was that he, alone among mortals, knew what that meant. Thus the independent soul of one of the most melodious talents in literary history withered away till there remained as evidence of its existence only bursts of petty peevishness and the reputed habit in his old age of composing and reciting filthy limericks, to the dismay of Lady Tennyson. He showed a dignified reticence in the matter of a title. When a baronetcy was offered him, he refused it once. When it was offered the second time, he arranged with Gladstone that it be reserved for his son. When Disraeli offered it to him a third time and replied to his recital of the arrangement with Gladstone that the reservation of a baronetcy for a son was contrary to precedent, Tennyson quickly wrote him, "It is quite certain that I never desired anything contrary to precedent." The result of this hesitation about a baronetcy was that he was presently offered a barony, and accepted it reluctantly in recognition of "the honor done by the Queen to literature through him."

Huneker said that Whitman was "a gay old pagan who never called a sin a sin when it was a pleasure"; but when it comes to actual sins, in the decalogic sense, outside of his reputed homosexuality, it is a little hard to find any, unless his easy casualness be identified with the sin of sloth. On the whole Whitman's great sin was no particular act or habit, but the common sin of most of the poets—he simply chose, in the tenor of his life, wholly to ignore the common ways and views of society. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Keats, he seems never to have had the faintest misgivings over his irregularity, and never even considered the feasibility of reconformance. At twenty-one he was already in revolt against the American mania for money, and projected a book in protest against the subjection of his countrymen to the tyranny of things. He took his editorship of *The Brooklyn Eagle* very casually, frequently absenting himself from the office for days and weeks, and when he was feeling dull he announced that important fact in the paper: "*The Brooklyn Eagle* 'begs leave to state' that this is one of the dullest days it has ever experienced." At

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about thirty he began to cast off the last shreds of convention. He quit regular journalism and all regular work. He helped his father at carpentry, did a little independent printing on the press he owned, became a bohemian, a frequenter of Pfaff's saloon, and the companion of artists, bus-drivers and ferry-men. He began to affect the flowing hair and tie and the manners of a "powerful uneducated person," dining without his coat and drinking out of a tin cup. In 1859, when he went to Boston to see Emerson just before bringing out the second edition of the *Leaves*, his friendly host walked him up and down the Common for hours trying to persuade him to omit the sex poems which would make his book almost unsalable. When he had finished an impregnable structure of arguments Emerson paused, looked up and inquired, "What have you to say to such things?" "Only," replied Walt, "that while I can't answer them at all I feel more settled than ever to adhere to my own theory." Emerson was secretly pleased, they then went and had a good dinner at the American House. In 1880, being on the verge of publishing an edition in Boston, Whitman stubbornly refused to expunge eighty objectionable lines, though he was threatened with prosecution by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. He was always a great patriot and exulted in the recollection of war-like ancestors whose illustriousness mitigated his immediate social insignificance. He never forgot the great-uncle who fell in the Battle of Brooklyn, nor the maternal ancestor, a Major Brush, who died in an English prison, nor the uncle who camped in Brooklyn during the War of 1812, near Fort Greene, where Washington had also been and which Whitman celebrated in his Independence Day Ode; nor did he forget the fact that as a boy of six he had been kissed by the ancient Lafayette on the occasion of the latter's visit to Brooklyn. He became a loud jingo for foreign wars, particularly the shameful Mexican War, believing that our army was carrying liberty to the "average man" everywhere, the proud "freeholder dwelling in the Holy Land of Democracy." After he had long urged a proper observance of an approaching Independence Day in Brooklyn, and had

volunteered a very bad ode, to be sung to the tune of the *Star-Spangled Banner*, it unhappily poured rain on the 4th and the parade was small. Yet Whitman "waded through the mud in the ardor of an enthusiast, bowing to all whom he recognized and exclaiming, 'A fine day!'" He showed his independence in the matter of slavery. When the Democratic Party failed to endorse free soil, and the proprietor of *The Eagle* stuck by the party, Whitman did not hesitate to throw up his job. The reasons for his failure to enlist in the War are conjectural. Perhaps his forty-two years—though he was in perfect health. Perhaps his unwillingness to leave his mother, who was the principal devotion of his life. Perhaps the notion that it was the poet's duty to exhort and minister and not to fight. He was loyal enough, surely. One night in Pfaff's Restaurant George Arnold rose and proposed a toast, "Success to the Southern arms." Whitman leaped out of his usual god-like benignity and made an indignant patriotic speech. In the argument that followed Arnold reached across the table and yanked his whiskers. They scuffled, were separated and Whitman left the place, not to return for twenty years. Later he said, *à propos* this incident—but why not of the war also?—"I was much better satisfied to listen to a fight than to take part in it." Not long after the Arnold affair news reached the family that Whitman's brother George, a captain, lay wounded at Fredericksburg. Walt packed his carpet bag, journeyed from Brooklyn to the front and found his brother encamped with his men, his wounded foot healed, and took up quarters with him in his tent—a comment on the easy regulations of the time. Here Whitman began his hospital work, spending the winter in going about among the wounded on the battlefields and in the hospital tents, going over with a flag of truce to help bury the dead. He returned to Washington in the spring with some wounded, via a flat-car and a steamer up the Potomac, one boy dying on the way. In Washington he got a job in the Paymaster General's office, where he habitually worked until three, then ate his second and last meal, bathed, put on clean linen, took his army knapsack, filled it with presents for the boys, and

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started his long rounds of the hospitals. He estimated that he visited 100,000 sick and wounded. In 1863 he got a better job in the Department of the Interior. But unfortunately the good Secretary Harlan of the Interior found a copy of *Leaves of Grass* in Whitman's desk and, after surreptitiously devouring it after hours, fired Whitman for a free-lover. But another clerkship was found for him, not long after, in the Attorney General's office, a position which he continued to hold after the war. In 1886 a bill was introduced in Congress, and favorably reported, to give Whitman a pension for his war services. But he refused to approve it, saying he had not served for pay.

Rossetti at fourteen told his brother, "What I *ought* to do is what I *can't* do." When he was living with Ford Madox Brown, painting *Found*, the Browns being extremely poor and Mrs. Brown nearing her time, his unconventionality became crude. He slept on the parlor floor every morning until eleven, was constantly demanding food and turpentine, painted slowly, wearing Brown's great-coat and breeches the while, and refused to go home when Brown suggested it. One day he was seen to run out of a confectioner's shop with a half-eaten tart in his hand, stare at a passing woman's face, and ask her to be his model.

Christina Rossetti was "obsessed . . . with the idea of moral salvage," and read "aloud to the sulky fallen women in the gray-walled homes." At the same time she professed contempt for "prim and prudent maidens who insisted on the ring," always hated Lizzy Siddell, and sent her a waste-paper basket as a wedding present a year after her marriage to her brother.

Swinburne had charming manners. When he and Max Beerbohm were presented to each other they almost bumped heads, so low they bowed. Also, in spite of the licentiousness of his verse, and professions generally, he had a sort of passionate priggishness. At a dinner he organized in commemoration of Lamb, he was shocked at a ribald address by one of the guests and was severe in "bringing the conversation back to paths of decorum." Yet upon this base of private guilelessness he erected without ostentation

a public literary figure probably the most *rococo* of any of the memorable poets. He was in fact no more than the perennial *naughty boy*, but his humorless seriousness and fearless spontaneity elevated his pranks, in the world's eyes, to rebellious dimensions. As a child when he didn't like the maid's reading of Shakespeare to him, he emptied a pot of jam on her head. At Eton, aged twelve, he used to stand up in bed and recite poetry alone. At Oxford, when he and the other young *æsthetes* were present in the house of a nice dull high-brow, a Doctor Acland, who read to them a paper on sewage, Swinburne made a scene. While a guest at Navestock in a house adjoining the church, he chose Sunday morning to stand at the front gate, watching the people bound for their devotions, himself clad in a crimson dressing gown and vermillion shoes, and the whole topped by his wild red hair. The parishioners were badly unnerved and most of them turned back, thinking it was the devil. At a public dinner Swinburne, being asked to propose a toast of "The Press," rose and shrieked, "The press is a damnable institution! A horrible institution! A beastly institution!" and sank back into his seat and closed his eyes. Having been invited to meet Tennyson, he passed the civilities with him, then retired to another room and talked and laughed loudly with some younger crony. In middle life he visited the Island of Sark, and, returning, praised it loudly in the London streets, proclaiming that he was going to be king of it. He was a frequenter of peep-shows and other depraved entertainments. After Watts-Dunton whisked him off to Putney to save him from alcoholism, Swinburne lived there for thirty years a perfectly regular, colorless and healthy life, resigning to his protector all initiative and liberty of action in return for watchful care. Politically Swinburne became early a pugnacious radical, though Liberty—like Italy where he imagined her to be stalking in thunder—was an abstraction to him. At Oxford—as later—he danced and declaimed before his portrait of Mazzini, and at undergraduate meetings would go skipping round and round the table, screaming abuse of Louis Napoleon and advocating his assassination. Orsini, who made the tyrannicidal attempt, thereby qualified

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to have his portrait hung in Swinburne's rooms along with Mazzini's, and to become the object of the same terpsichorean devotions. When Swinburne went to Paris at twenty-one his friends gravely exacted a promise from him to do nothing to undermine the authority of Louis Napoleon, and since the monarch continued to reign his dangerous enemy seems to have kept his promise.

Emily Dickinson refused to permit her friend Doctor Dwight to convert her, being unable to believe that God was her enemy, or she hateful in his sight. While she was a girl at South Hadley Seminary, the students were told that Christmas would be a day of fasting and meditation, and they were asked to rise "in token of responsive observation." Emily and one other girl remained seated. Then the two were asked to stand, to let the school see them, and only Emily stood. She was sent home in disgrace.

The most striking feature of Thompson's character was his haughty and unapproachable integrity, maintained in the face of hunger, illness and the consciousness of defeat. When, after the successive failure of his gestures toward the priesthood, medicine, business and the army, his father for the first time showed impatience and charged him with alcoholism on account of his flush—which in fact was opiate—Thompson without hesitation made a bundle of his personal possessions, put his Blake and his *Æschylus* in his pocket and left the house for good. Two years later, ragged and delirious from hunger in the London streets, he suddenly heard a voice by his elbow, "Is your soul saved?", to which Thompson, turning savagely, "What right have you to ask me that?" Unabashed, the good cobbler McMasters retorted, "If you won't let me save your soul, let me save your body"; and the incident was in fact the first step in Thompson's escape—or at least the escape of his body—from squalor. The Rothschild incident showed perhaps less Thompson's conventional morality than again his independence of mind, his unwillingness to be beholden to anybody. While a bum he once sold a paper to one of the Rothschilds who left a florin in his hand and walked away. Thompson chased him, but lost him in the crowd. Years later, while

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at table at the Meynells', he read of the death of this Rothschild, dropped his spoon, and cried, "Then I can never repay him!"

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

In general. For many anecdotes of unconventionality not listed here, see *In Action, Love, Excess, Miscellaneous Aberrations*.

Pages 337-8, Marvell. For his possible share in the exhuming of Cromwell see *Friendship and Sociability*, pp. 110-11.

Pages 352-3, Landor. For his pugnacity, see *In Action*, pp. 396-7.

Pope (not mentioned in this section). For his intrigues see *Vanity*, pp. 484-8.

Thomson (not mentioned in this section). For his going to London alone, see *Struggle for Existence*, p. 302.

Collins (not mentioned in this section). For his weakly subservience to liquor, see *Struggle for Existence*, pp. 303, 323-4, and *Excess*, p. 461.

Chatterton (not mentioned in this section). For his refusal to compromise, see *Death*, p. 269.

## COURTS, CRIMES, AND PRISON

Considering that poets have sometimes been associated with birds and flowers, it may seem startling to find that of some 300 mentioned in this book 32 have been arrested or otherwise restrained, 21 have served prison terms, and 3, including 2 of those imprisoned, have paid fines or suffered other punishment. The figures, however, are less impressive when it is further observed that of 22 poets who have suffered some kind of punishment at the hands of the law, 15 have been political prisoners, 5 have been prisoners for debt, and only Jonson, Savage and Wilde have been convicted of crimes outside the innocent categories. Only Jonson and Savage committed any kind of homicide—the first in a duel, the second in an affray and probably in self-defense—and it is interesting that, poor and starving as many of the poets have been, not one has ever been charged with theft. Unconventional, boisterous, defiant, many of the poets have been; a few—especially in the Age of Reason—have been guilty of self-aggrandizing intrigues; but there is no evidence of criminality on the part of any of them.

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The following poets have been political prisoners, and have suffered sentences of imprisonment or worse: Surrey (executed), Harrington, Raleigh,\* Jonson,\* Nash,\* Wither (arrested by the Royalists in the Civil Wars—Denham interposed to save his life, saying that “as long as Wither lived he [Denham] would not be considered the worst poet in England”), Suckling,\* Lovelace (published a book of verse while in prison), Cleveland, Cartwright, Davenant (captured by the Puritans—Milton interposed to save his life and he returned the favor after the Restoration, seeing to it that Milton’s name was stricken from the list of exceptions to the Act of Oblivion), Waller,\* Granville, Montgomery, Hunt.\*

The following were imprisoned for debt: Dekkar, Marston, Savage,\* Lloyd, Smart.

Mild Geoffrey Chaucer had at least two brushes with the authorities, though the details remain conjectural. As a young man and a student in the Inner Temple he was fined for “beating a Franciscan Friar in Fleet-street.” When he was forty one Cecelia Chaumpaigne, daughter of “the late William Chaumpaigne and Agnes his wife,” brought charges against him of abduction “de rapto meo,” but subsequently released him.

Elizabeth put Raleigh in the Tower for having an affair with one of her maids of honor, the daughter of Sir Thomas Throgmorton, whom he later married. This first confinement, when he was thirty-nine, lasted only a few months. Upon the accession of James I, Cecil, with whom Raleigh had formerly co-operated, poisoned the new King against him, charging him, without any basis, with sedition and treason in plotting to dethrone James and crown Arabella Stuart and so re-establish Catholicism in England. In the trial, the attorney-general, Sir Edward Coke, lacking any evidence, made up for the lack by denominating Raleigh a “viper,” a “damnable atheist,” “the most vile and execrable traitor that ever lived,” “monster,” “spider of hell” and the like. Raleigh made a dignified defense, and though he

\* Poets whose names are starred will be mentioned in more detail later in this section.

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was found guilty of high treason by a fixed jury, the plotters themselves were ashamed before his candor, and instead of being executed he was sent to the Tower where he remained twelve years, during which he wrote his *History of the World*, and during six of which his wife was permitted to be with him. At the end of that time he persuaded the King to release him to lead what would have been for the monarch a profitable expedition against Guiana. But James seems only to have intended to do away with him, and he was also at the time courting Spain in the interest of a match between Prince Charles and the Infanta. Accordingly, he secretly notified the Spanish of the projected raid and then let Raleigh proceed. Raleigh was overwhelmed by a superior force, returned to England in disgrace, and was promptly arrested. There being no real charges against him he was executed a year later on the old finding of treason, having in the meantime written some of his best verse in his cell over the Tower gate.

Spenser was once haled into court, charged with having sought improperly to enlarge his great Irish estate.

When Shakespeare was about twenty he got into trouble for poaching deer on the lands of Sir Thomas Lucy, a person of consequence in Warwickshire, and is supposed to have run away from Stratford to escape punishment. At least once more Shakespeare came under the shadow of the law. In 1596 one William Wayte, stepson of an extortionate Justice of the Peace, William Gardiner, petitioned for sureties of the peace against Shakespeare, Francis Langley, owner of the Swan Theatre where Shakespeare was probably acting, and two unknown women, Dorothy Soar, "wife of John Soar," and Anne Lee.

Before he was twenty-one Ben Jonson helped Nash in the composition of a scurrilous play called *The Isle of Dogs*, and acted in it. The play was a satire on the officials of London, and on its first night at The Swan there was a serious riot. Nash escaped, most of the company fled to Bristol, but Jonson and two other actors were caught and imprisoned for sedition, slander and mutiny. After six weeks Ben was pardoned and liberated, and promptly gave Nash a beating

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for having deserted him. Not long after this Ben's pugnacity got him into another and more ominous pickle. One night he had a drunken fight with Gabriel Spenser, Henslowe's star actor, and, enlisting Chapman for second, the next day fought Spenser with swords and killed him. Dueling was a gallows offense and Ben was arrested and thrown into Newgate Prison. A considerable clamor was raised on his behalf, and he was at length freed because of his education and literary importance. But his property was confiscated and he was branded on the thumb with a "T," standing for Tyburn where the gallows stood. Nine years later, when he was thirty, Jonson again had a close shave. Having directed the pageant and festivities incident to the entrance of James into the city to be crowned, and having been rewarded by the new monarch, not long after the coronation he proceeded to collaborate with Marston and Chapman—though his contribution was less than either of theirs—in *Eastward Hoe*, a play satirizing James's profligate creation of Scottish knights. All three were promptly arrested and awaited the sentence usual in these cases, that their noses be slit and their ears lopped off. It was said at the time that Jonson's popularity and favor with the king would have exempted him from the original arrest but that he chose voluntarily to go to jail with his friends. When the day for the trial approached James was in progress in the provinces, having either forgotten the affair or perhaps never having known of it. In a final effort Jonson's mother and his old schoolmaster, Camden, managed to get a hasty messenger to James, who read the play, was much amused, and sent a royal pardon which arrived on the evening before the day set for the trial. Upon his liberation Jonson gave a great banquet and, his mother being present, she produced two papers of poison one of which she declared she would have put in her son's liquor had he been condemned as expected, and the other of which she would have taken herself.

Upon learning of Donne's clandestine marriage, his father-in-law, Sir George More, had him thrown into the Fleet prison.

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After the execution of Charles I, Suckling fled to Spain, was promptly gobbled up by the Inquisition and put through horrible tortures which probably affected his mind.

Waller was arrested by the Parliament in a royalist plot. By the most supine turning of state's evidence and other intrigues, he got off with a year's imprisonment, £10,000 fine and temporary banishment.

On November 20, 1727, Savage went to a coffee house with two gentlemen named Gregory and Merchant and sat drinking with them most of the night. There being no accommodations for them in that place, they emerged on the street, being more or less drunk and purposing to amuse themselves at large. Having walked some distance they saw a light in a certain bawdy house known as Robinson's Coffee House, near Charing Cross, and went in. Merchant, who seems to have been drunker than Gregory or Savage, loudly demanded a room. He was told that the best quarters were in the adjoining parlor, which a company were about to vacate, being then in process of paying their reckoning. Merchant thereupon burst into this room followed by his companions, shouldered his way through the company there to the fire, deliberately kicked over a table and so started a brawl. Merchant was unarmed, but Savage and Gregory drew, as did their opponents. In the ensuing fracas Savage wounded a maid in the head when she tried to hold him and mortally wounded one Sinclair under circumstances that were never quite clarified, whether in self-defense, or, as some testified, Savage thrust Sinclair in the back when he was engaged with Gregory, or whether, as others testified, he struck him when Sinclair was facing Savage but with lowered point. Savage and Merchant fled from the house, but Savage, having an impulse to give himself up, soon stopped running and Merchant stopped with him and they were easily arrested by one of their late antagonists and some soldiers he had enlisted in the chase. Being guarded for the remainder of the night, they were in the morning committed by three Justices to the Gate-house and later in the day, on the death of Sinclair, to Newgate Prison where they were exempted from the ignominy of

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chains and confined in the yard, apart from the other prisoners. At the trial for murder the chief witnesses against Savage were the madam of the bawdy house, her maid, a pimp and a whore who had been in the company of the opposing faction. The court was thronged, for Savage was a well-known writer. He had several character witnesses who swore truthfully that he was an inoffensive person, not given to brawls, and that he was a poor man, the butt of misfortune, whose recognized talents were notoriously under-rewarded. In his own defense Savage spoke with great eloquence and candor for over an hour, and his argument was received with loud applause by the audience. But Mr. Justice Page, presiding, proceeded thereupon to prejudice the jury with the following instructions, *inter alia*: "Gentlemen of the jury, you are to consider that Mr. Savage is a very great man, a much greater man than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; that he wears very fine clothes, much finer clothes than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; that he has abundance of money in his pocket, much more money than you or I, gentlemen of the jury; but, gentlemen of the jury, is it not a very hard case, gentlemen of the jury, that Mr. Savage should therefore kill you or me, gentlemen of the jury?" All of this, with the possible exception of the statement that Savage was a great man, was palpably false: if Savage wore fine clothes, he had purchased them in preference to food; and he surely had little or no money in his pocket or elsewhere. He rose to expostulate. The judge ordered him to be silent. He continued. The judge ordered that he be taken from the bar by force. Savage and Gregory were found guilty of murder, and Merchant, who had started the row but had been happily unarmed, got off with manslaughter. Savage was shortly thereafter sentenced to death. A considerable movement was now set on foot to obtain his pardon from the Queen, who seems to have exercised the office, not of granting pardons, but of selecting those among the accused who might be admitted to plead for pardon before the King. The movement on behalf of Savage was for a long time obstructed by his mother, who, hearing of it, hastened to transmit to the Queen

a fabricated story of his having attempted to murder her when he was sixteen. Flimsy as this fiction was, it caused the Queen for some months to refuse to hear the petition of Savage's friends. "Thus," says Johnson, "had Savage perished by the evidence of a bawd, a strumpet, and his mother, had not justice and compassion procured him an advocate of rank too great to be rejected unheard, and of virtue too eminent to be heard without being believed." This was the Countess of Hertford who, being appraised of Savage's misfortunes, engaged herself in his cause, and, "demanding an audience of the Queen," told her the whole story of his mother's persecution of him and convinced her of the absurdity of the maternal accusation. Immediately thereafter Savage was admitted to bail. On March 9, 1728, he pleaded and obtained the King's pardon, and subsequently, through his efforts, Gregory was also pardoned and later was given the office of Collector of Antigua. Throughout the rest of his life, though he never thought himself guilty of murder, the fact of the homicide hung darkly over his spirits. His next brush with the law was of a milder nature. He was accused by the editor of *The Daily Courant*, a paper inspired by the ministry, of electioneering against the Court through having appeared at the head of a Tory mob, the charge being intensified by identifying his alleged action with ingratitude to the Queen who had saved his life and in whose pension he then was. The charge was groundless and, the details of it being specific, Savage was easily able to publish and establish an alibi, for he had not even been present on the occasion described. He demanded a retraction, and not being favored with it, proceeded to bring an action for libel in the King's Bench. He soon tired of this controversy, however, but had no sooner dropped it than he found himself the defendant in a similar action in the same court. Without sufficient legal background he had plunged into a current conflict between the Bishop of London and the Chancellor, and published a scurrilous poem, entitled *The Progress of a Divine*, in which the whole clergy was superlatively vilified. He was promptly haled into the King's Bench on a charge of obscenity. "It was urged, in

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his defense, that obscenity was criminal when it was intended to promote the practice of vice; but that Mr. Savage had only introduced obscene ideas, with the view to exposing them to detestation, and of amending the age, by showing the deformity of wickedness. . . . This plea was admitted; and Sir Philip Yorke, who then presided in that court, dismissed the information with encomiums upon the purity and excellence of Mr. Savage's writings." It was a final exhibition of Savage's pecuniary irregularities that led him for the second and last time through the gates of Newgate Prison. He was arrested in Bristol for a small debt, and being too proud to appeal to his friends to pay it, was transferred to Newgate. In this second confinement, during his forty-sixth year, he was treated with great respect by the jailer, who became his friend and allowed him a private room. Also he made himself popular with the other prisoners by consorting with them, especially in the kitchen, and assisting them in their menial tasks. Altogether this was perhaps the easiest, the least harassed period of his life. He was adequately fed and could devote all of his time to poetry. His buoyant spirits rose to the heights they always inhabited upon even a momentary release from want, and he wrote to a friend, "I sing very freely in my cage." Six months after his incarceration, on July 31, 1743, his keeper found him dead in his bed.

Churchill was an intimate friend of Wilkes and associated with him on the seditious *North Briton*. A warrant was sworn out for both of them on which Wilkes was arrested in Churchill's presence. But the poet escaped because he was unknown to the officer and Wilkes had the presence of mind to address him as "Thomson."

In 1803 Blake had a brush with the government. A drunken soldier, a bullying sergeant named Scofield, insisted on entering Blake's garden at Felpham. After remonstrance which failed to impress the soldier, Blake scuffled with him, got him by the arm and led him to his barracks. The man entered a charge of sedition against him, alleging that he had shouted all manner of treason while running him out of the garden. By this time Blake was a thorough pacifist

and had no interest in the French or their late Revolution. Nevertheless he was known to have been a radical, and in those hysterical times was in real danger of execution. He himself believed, and perhaps correctly, that he had been "framed" by the government. He got off through the testimony of his patron, Hayley, who was the great man of the region. Blake's popularity with the people of the neighborhood appeared in the applause of the court-room when his acquittal was announced.

Freneau was captured in 1780, while trying to escape to the West Indies, and confined on a British prison ship, which experience greatly aggravated his rancor and increased his eloquence.

Tom Moore was once jailed for challenging Jeffrey to a duel. He wrote a note to a friend, the poetaster Spenser, asking him to bail him out, but Spenser sent word back that he could not come to him then, "for it was already twelve o'clock and he had to be dressed by four."

In 1808 when Hunt was twenty-four he was imprisoned for two years for printing in *The Examiner* the opinion that Prince Regent was "a fat Adonis of fifty." While he was in jail his literary and liberal friends visited him freely and altogether Hunt's detention was the most bucolic and probably the most pleasant of any of the poets' compulsory vacations. He had two rooms on the ground floor, one of which he used as a bedroom and the other of which he adorned as a "poetical" study. "I papered the walls with a trellis of roses; I had the ceiling coloured with clouds and sky; the barred windows were screened with Venetian blinds; and when my book-cases were set up with their busts and flowers, and a pianoforte made its appearance, perhaps there was not a handsomer room on that side of the water. . . . Charles Lamb declared that there was no other such room except in a fairy tale. But I had another surprise, which was a garden. There was a little yard outside, railed off from another belonging to the neighboring ward. This yard I shut in with green palings, adorned it with a green trellis, bordered it with a thick bed of earth from a nursery, and even contrived to have a grass plot. The earth I filled with

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flowers and young trees. There was an apple-tree from which we managed to get a pudding the second year. As to my flowers, they were allowed to be perfect. A poet from Derbyshire (Moore) told me he had seen no such hearts-ease. . . . Here I wrote and read in fine weather, sometimes under an awning. In autumn my trellises were hung with scarlet runners, which added to the flowery investment. I used to shut my eyes in my arm-chair, and affect to think myself hundreds of miles off. . . ." Under this ideal patronage Hunt wrote most or all of his *Story of Rimini*.

Upon returning from the elopement with Mary Godwin, Shelley skulked about London to escape the bailiffs that were waiting to throw him into debtor's prison. Upon Harriet's suicide, he rushed to London to claim his children, but was met by a chancery suit on the part of the Westbrooks, asking that Harriet's father and her sister Eliza be appointed guardians of the children and that Shelley be restrained from seeing them. The court withheld the children from Shelley but appointed as their guardians his nominees, Doctor and Mrs. Thomas Hume, permitting Shelley to see them once a month in the presence of Doctor and Mrs. Hume, and requiring him to pay the guardians £120 a year.

Whitman was once haled into court for thrashing a boy who pestered him while fishing. The foreman of the jury, with a Yorkshire brogue, announced the verdict—"We find 'e didn't 'it 'im 'alf 'ard enough."

Lanier was captured and confined in a Union prison during the War of the Secession.

Wilde was found guilty of immoral practices with each of six persons. He was sentenced to two years at hard labor —a punishment which the Royal Commission had previously condemned as inhuman. Frank Harris sent around a petition to get the term reduced, but no one would sign it.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Page 369, Surrey. For the plot against him, see *Death*, p. 260.

Page 370, Shakespeare. For details of Gardener Brawl, see *In Action*, p. 392.

## SUCCESS AND FAME

In the *Introduction* I tried to describe the aims of the poet in terms which may best be summarized as communication. The poet is somebody who is "pleased" at once with "his own passions" and with "similar goings on" in the universe around him, and his desire is to establish a sort of understanding or comprehensive current between his inner world and the macrocosm out yonder. This impulse is always more or less frustrated by the superficialities both of the poet himself and of society generally. He fails of primary and direct communication and falls back upon the secondary method of art. First, he brings the outer object to himself by making an imitation of it; second, he displays that imitation to the world and requires that the world shall recognize it. To effect these two processes becomes the poet's ambition. The first process, usually called *creation*, is an æsthetic and inner gesture which is beyond the present scope. The second process, which is *communication*, in the usual, literal sense, comes within the purview of the present section. It is, I think, equally important with creation to the poet's satiety. For present purposes we may take the extent of the poet's communication to an audience as the measure of his *success*; and since communication to an audience implies that he is known to that audience, for better or for worse, we may likewise take *fame*, in a qualified sense, as the poet's aim and the measure of his success. If we hold to the idea of *communication* as the chief aim we are not likely to use the word *fame* in too loose or too wide a significance.

Fame being a condition subsisting in the minds of persons other than the object of it, the question is, to what persons does the poet want to be known? With what sort of people does he want to be famous? As possible answers to that question there are three general types of fame which I shall call respectively, *Popular Fame*, *Eclectic Fame* and *Educated Fame*.

By *Popular Fame* I mean repute among all or most of

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the population, the kind of fame enjoyed by great generals, aviators, actresses, politicians and criminals. This kind of fame, the quality of being impersonally notorious, implies no understanding, no communication between the individual and those who know his name; wherefore no poet has ever desired it. The most absurd minions of poetic vanity have never looked farther than the attention of such an audience as is qualified, or is supposed to be qualified, to understand them. And for all but the mediæval balladists, and their modern survivors, the newspapers poets, this audience is relatively small.

By Eclectic Fame I mean the approval of the high-brows, the critics and the other poets. Every poet desires this, but he desires more. His peers are a small jury in a generation, a hundred or so. Only the effete absurdity of youth and the self-gratulatory rationalization of defeated old age pretend to be content with so small an audience.

Somewhere between Popular and Eclectic Fame lies what I would call Educated Fame, repute residing in that broad class, however attenuated, to which the poet himself belongs, the presumably educated class, people whose reading goes beyond novels and the newspapers, people who, though they may have long given over poetry, yet at one time knew the difference between poetry and verse, could yet recollect the names of at least our twenty great poets, and probably still have a favorite poet or poem in the great tradition; people, in other words, with whom this particular poet *might* communicate, if they would listen to him, people who are at least *qualified* to hear him. The poet desires to reach, not the whole world, but the whole of his *potential audience*, *however great or small it may be*. Eclectic Fame, *succès d'estime*, is a dimensionless point in the sky; but a general reputation among educated people is a sort of pyramid building up from beneath to support that point, constituting altogether a monument that will stand against time as long as any continuous race will stand.

Which raises the question of the second and final dimension of the fame the poet desires. I have tried to locate it in place; it remains to define it in time. Does he want ap-

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plause now, that he can hear with his living ears? Or does he look to some perpetuation beyond his physical life, some such social immortality as that enjoyed by our twenty great poets and perhaps forty or more besides in lesser degree?

Any poet who has graduated from the neophyte zest of youth and still professes to ignore contemporary fame, I suspect of being a liar. But I suspect equally those poets who have apparently acquiesced in the common sense of the common-minded realists who say truly of themselves, "When I am dead, I am dead." Every true poet wants contemporary fame, but *more important than that*, he looks to *permanence, to the spectacle of his best work built finally into the fabric of the great literary tradition*. Unrealistically, mystically, he believes in secret that some day his name and his work will be accepted by some ultimate tribunal which will hand down a last judgment of history from which there will be no appeal—"Let this poet endure."

The literary world has always been curious to know what that tribunal is and when and how it passes judgment. We know that Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth and Coleridge have been received. Whether we like them or not, we know that they could not be removed without destroying the edifice of literature. With respect to Donne, Dryden and Gray, there is perhaps still some doubt. With Byron, Shelley and Keats we approach times and opinions that are yet controversial. With Whitman, Tennyson, Browning and Thompson, we know that a long time is yet to run before they are finally placed. So with many names I omitted from my list of twenty. Skelton, Sidney, Drayton, Drummond, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, Marvell and several more are comfortably settled in what we might call Modest Immortality. Blake, Poe and Rossetti are still dubious, still subject to fad. Any of them may yet belong on the great list.

It is impossible to place the Tribunal of Fame precisely in place or in time. But it is possible to venture a few guesses about it. The tribunal surely consists of the educated class I described, with the professional critics and poets at the top, and the academic people close under them. And

it usually passes judgment about a century after the poet's first flurry of fame. With two or three exceptional cases clearly before me, I yet suggest the following course of events as the customary qualification for inclusion in the list of the permanently great and famous.

First, the poet must run a sort of ordeal of fashion. Either during his life or later he must enjoy a burst of *sporadic fame*. Then at the inevitable swing of the literary pendulum against the sort of poetry he represented, he will probably suffer a period of *sporadic infamy*, when he will be denounced as passionately as he was acclaimed before. Now he is barely qualified, he has been noticed and removed from the list of the negligibles. Now a long time will pass, perhaps a century, when his soul has no repose, until at length there will come a period when his name is no longer mentioned either for extravagant praise or extravagant vilification, when he is no longer the shuttle-cock of fashion, no longer squabbled over and "placed" by the critics, and his graph of repute, now taken for granted, moves without violent momentary change either slowly upward or slowly down. Now his real test begins, and when there ensues an appreciable period when the current literary fashion is *opposed* to the type of writing he represents, then he stands quietly at the bar of history, and without any audible advocate or accuser, is quietly judged. If then he is referred to in current critical writing, not for condemnation, but merely as an accepted figure, the representative of a certain kind of verse, then out of style, one of the convenient milestones in relation to which the course of literature may be reviewed; and if at the same time he is established in the schools as an acknowledged name in the history of poetry; and if he is then enjoying a moderate, unheralded sale: then it may be said that History has accepted him and his fame has come into that permanence he desired. But if during this period which is critically prejudiced against him his name is simply neglected, critically, academically and commercially, then his reputation has surely fallen and is not likely to rise.

It is of academic interest to compare the contemporary fame of the poets with their permanent fame, in so far as the

latter can be estimated. I give my own estimate for what it is worth—having already confessed uncertainty as to the permanent status of Donne, Dryden, Gray, Blake and every poet no older than Byron. For convenience I have divided both the “Contemporary” and “Permanent” lists into four subdivisions, the same in each case.

*I. Contemporary Fame:*

1. *Supreme.* Jonson, Cowley, Pope, Scott, Longfellow, Tennyson. Total, 6.
2. *Great.* Thomas of Ercildoune, Barbour, Gower, Skelton,\* Dunbar, Lyndsay, Grimald, Vaux, Edwards, Bryan, Boleyn, Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, Kyd, Peele, Greene, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Waller, Davenant, Denham, Anne Bradstreet, Butler, Wigglesworth, Dryden, Otway, Blackmore, Pomfret, J. Phillips, Prior, Addison, Gay, Carey, Blair, Thomson, Goldsmith, Gray, Trumbull, Churchill, Darwin, Wolcot, Cowper, Beattie, Hayley, Anna Seward, Crabbe, Phillis Wheatley, Freneau, Burns, Wordsworth, Southe, Landor, James and Horace Smith, Campbell, Moore, Hunt, Byron, Halleck, Keble, Clare, Felicia Hemans, Hood, Macaulay, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, Elizabeth Barrett, Browning, Milnes, Whitman, Meredith (as a poet), Rossetti, Jean Ingelow, Francis Thompson. Total, 78.
3. *Modest.* Chaucer†, Hunnis, Sidney, Lodge, Donne, Ford, Milton, Duchess of Newcastle, Edmund Smith, Roscommon, Rochester, Shadwell, Settle, Stepney, Rowe, Swift (as a poet), Tickell, Cibber, Hughes, Savage, Johnson, Whitehead, Akenside, Warton, Coleridge, Tannahill, Shelley, Keats, Laetitia Landon, Emerson (as a poet), Poe, Swinburne. Total, 32.
4. *Negligible.* Wyatt, Surrey, Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, Marvell, Collins, Blake, Fitzgerald. Total, 9. (This small list includes only those who rose out of contemporary

\* The critical records down to Elizabethan times are so fragmentary that I have omitted—perhaps unjustly in the cases of Thomas of Ercildoune, Gower, Skelton and Lyndsay—to ascribe “Supreme” reputation to any of them.

† I have placed Chaucer in this “Modest” category at a guess, finding no evidence, except his interment in the Abbey, of much contemporary reputation as a poet.

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obscurity to a permanent reputation of a more imposing order. If it included all of the poets who never emerged from obscurity it would contain many hundred names most of which are unrecorded.)

### *II. Permanent Fame:*

1. *Supreme.* Shakespeare, Milton. Total, 2.
2. *Great.* Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Donne, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Emerson, Tennyson, Browning, Whitman, Thompson. Total, 18. (This is the list of twenty presumably established names, which I have used throughout the book, less Shakespeare and Milton, who are elevated to the "supreme" position.)
3. *Modest.* Gower, Skelton, Dunbar, Lyndsay, Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, Daniel, Drayton, Kyd, Peele, Greene, Lodge, Ford, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Herbert, Davenant, Waller, Marvell, Crashaw, Vaughan, Butler, Cowley, Otway, Prior, Swift, Gay, Thomson, Goldsmith, Collins, Cowper, Crabbe, Blake, Southey, Scott, Landor, Moore, Campbell, Hunt, Hood, Macaulay, Whittier, Longfellow, Poe, Elizabeth Barrett, Fitzgerald, Meredith, Rossetti, Swinburne. Total, 51.
4. *Negligible.* Thomas of Ercildoune, Barbour, Grimald, Vaux, Edwards, Hunnis, Bryan, Boleyn, Denham, Anne Bradstreet, Wigglesworth, Duchess of Newcastle, E. Smith, Roscommon, Rochester, Shadwell, Settle, Blackmore, Pomfret, J. Phillips, Stepney, Rowe, Addison (as a poet), Tickell, Carey, Savage, Cibber, Hughes, Blair, Johnson (as a poet), Whitehead, Akenside, Churchill, Darwin, Beattie, Hayley, Wolcot, Anna Seward, Trumbull, Freneau, Phillis Wheatley, Warton, Tannahill, James and Horace Smith, Keble, Halleck, Clare, Lætitia Landon, Milnes, Holmes, Felicia Hemans, Lowell, Jean Ingelow. Total 54.

In comparing the above two lists, the fate of the "supreme," the prophetic contemporary reputations is striking. Out of six which I have recorded, only Pope and Tennyson have held at all, and it is supposed by many that Tennyson is headed for Lethe. At any rate the other four have sunk permanently to petty stations.

The changes which have overtaken contemporary reputa-

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tions of the second or "great" category are also illuminating. Out of the 78 of these which I have listed, 1, Shakespeare, has gone to the "supreme" position, 10 have held their status, altogether 11 out of 78, about 1 in 7; 32 have slipped down into the "modest" repute of the textbooks; and the rest, 35, have vanished, probably forever.

The fate of the contemporary "modest" reputations has been a little more encouraging. Out of the 32 listed in this category, 1, Milton, has risen to "supreme," and 6 to "great" fame, altogether 7 out of 32, more than 1 out of 5. The contemporary "modest" reputations have held up very well against the combined "supreme" and "great" ones. The two higher categories, numbering together 84, have produced 13 out of 20 permanently "great" or "supreme" names; while the "modest" reputations, numbering only 32, have produced 7 of the 20 illustrious names. Fifteen per cent of the combined "supreme" and "great" reputations of their own day have survived into permanent eminence; while 22 per cent of the "modest" reputations have risen to the same distinction. The general inference is that while contemporary "negligible" fame is a bad omen for the future, those poets who receive in their own day only mediocre recognition stand at the last judgment of history on an equal footing with those who have been hailed as great in their time. Altogether out of 116 poets who received any recognition at all in their own day, only 20, or about 17 per cent, have held permanent eminence, 42, or about 36 per cent, have settled into only modest fame; and 54, or about 47 per cent, have disappeared entirely. Of poets who were obscure in their own day, it is impossible to say what percentage has risen even to modest immortality. But as the number of such poets is very large, the percentage is surely small. All in all, if a poet receives any recognition at all in his own day he has a fifty-fifty chance of some kind of immortality.

There are two lists in English history which are remarkable equally for their exclusions and inclusions:

I. Poets Laureate: Spenser, Daniel, Jonson, Davenant, Dryden, Shadwell, Tate, Rowe, Eusden, Cibber, Whitehead,

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Warton, Pye, Southey, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Austin, Bridges, Masefield.

II. Poets with Monuments in Westminster Abbey: Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Drayton, Jonson, Beaumont, Milton, Cowley, Dryden, Shadwell, Addison, Prior, J. Phillips, Rowe, Gay, Cary, Mason, Gray, Johnson, Garrick, Sheridan, Thomson, Goldsmith, Henderson, Anstey, Booth, Spottiswood, South, Burns, Coleridge, Southey, Gifford, Campbell, Macaulay, Longfellow, Tennyson, Browning.

Here are a few miscellaneous anecdotes respecting the contemporary fame of the poets:

When Pope entered the theatre for the first night of Thomson's *Agamemnon* he was greeted by spontaneous applause from the whole audience.

When Scott at sixty was ordered abroad for his health, the Admiralty furnished a warship to take him to Naples.

*The Cenci* was the only book of Shelley's to go into a second edition during his life.

When Emerson's house in Concord burned in his seventieth year, \$16,000 was quickly raised to restore it and to send him, during the reconstruction, on a vacation in Europe. On his return, all of Concord had gathered to meet him at the station. "The church bells tolled, and a cheer went up . . . as the train drew in . . . and Emerson appeared on the platform. A band . . . preceded his carriage through the streets and the school-children escorted him. An arch of triumph, covered with leaves and flowers, had been erected at his house; and the house had been restored. All the books, the pictures, the loved familiar objects stood again in their places. Emerson was overwhelmed. He crossed the threshold, looked about in astonishment, then returned again to the gate and made a little speech to his fellow-villagers."

The Emperor of Brazil after reading Whittier's *Cry of a Lost Soul*, sent him a pair of stuffed birds whose Indian name, derived from their mournful cry, signifies a lost soul. Later, this same Dom Pedro, visiting Boston, would have nothing of other entertainment until he could meet the poet. When the meeting at last came off at a large party for the

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foreign celebrity, he talked to Whittier exclusively, neglecting every one else in the room. On his departure he asked Whittier to accompany him downstairs, and just before entering his carriage threw his arms around him and "embraced him warmly." Late one evening in Amesbury, during the progress of the Civil War, Whittier answered the door-bell and saw a young man in an officer's uniform. "Is this Mr. Whittier?" "Yes." "Well, sir, I only wanted to have the pleasure of shaking hands with you." He seized the poet's hand, shook it warmly and vanished in the night.

One evening in 1879 on a steamer in the Mediterranean Professor E. A. Grosvenor of Amherst discovered that among the passengers a Russian, an Englishman, a Scotchman, a Greek and a Frenchman, besides himself, could all quote Longfellow, most of them extensively.

On the night before the offer of the laurel reached Tennyson he dreamed that Prince Albert came and kissed him on the cheek, to which salutation Tennyson replied in his dream, "Very kind, but very German." This was shortly after the appearance of *In Memoriam*. From that time his fame as a poet and seer was world-wide. Queen Emma of the Sandwich Islands had a throne-chair of teakwood specially made for him, and presents of all kinds poured in from every corner of the earth. Great men stooped to mean stratagems to obtain his autograph. His birthday became a national festival. Explorers named remote lakes and mountains after him, and horticulturists their rarest flowers. A cult was made of his habits and possessions, his sticks, his pipes, his tobacco, his dogs and the most minute acts of his daily routine. His life was traced by pilgrimages that, starting at his birthplace at Somersby, pursued the course of all his residences. Uninvited pilgrims, however, were not admitted to Farringford. So they peered through the hedge, or boosted each other to the top of the paling round his garden, or climbed neighboring trees whence they might peer down at the god cutting the lawn, or, failing in these more intimate attentions, they picketed themselves with opera glasses at good points of observation around the downs where he walked. A family who had come all the way from

Boston were permitted to pass the sacred gate but with the understanding that they were not to see Tennyson. Inadvertently he hove into sight. The spokesman for the family rushed up to him—"Mr. Tennyson, we have come four thousand miles to tell you . . ." "It cannot be," thundered the laureate, as he turned and swung out of sight again. One day two elderly American ladies found the gate open and timidly entered the garden to get a nearer view of the great man who was walking there. Tennyson was preoccupied and did not hear their light step on the gravel until they were quite close to him. "Go away! Go away!" he shouted suddenly, brandishing his stick at them, "Go away! Get out of here! Go!" They went. Some of the citizens of the Isle of Wight constituted themselves guides and made a good thing of conducting tourists to a sight of the great man. Not being always successful in producing the genuine article, they dressed up a sailor to look like Tennyson and after this game was exposed strangers would often walk up to him and ask skeptically, "Now are you the real Tennyson?" Mueller reports that Tennyson once told the Queen that he could no longer stay on the Isle of Wight on account of the tourists who came to stare at him. "The Queen, with a kindly irony, remarked that she did not suffer much from that grievance." When Tennyson was eighty-two an American laborer appeared at Aldworth, the laureate's ancillary home in Surrey, saying that he had worked his way across the Atlantic on a cattle-ship in order to recite *Maud*—all of it—to the author. "Having pity on the man," records Hallam Tennyson, "my father allowed him to do so, but suffered from the recitation. We paid the reciter's passage back to America, but never heard of him again." Tennyson survived this visitation less than a year.

Whitman's infamy upon the appearance of his first volume was celebrated in the following phrases, among others, collected by Mr. Legler from contemporary reviews: "Nastiness and insensibility to shame" . . . "the dirty paws of a harper whose plectrum is a muck-rake" . . . "broken out of bedlam" . . . "roots like a pig" . . . "sunken sensualist" . . . "ithyphallic indecency" . . . "rotten garbage of li-

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centious thoughts" . . . "a rowdy knight-errant" . . . apotheosis of sweat" . . . "the degraded helot of literature" . . . "of all writers, he is the most silly, the most blasphemous, and the most disgusting" . . . "roaming like a drunken satyr, with inflamed blood, through every field of lascivious thought." And Mr. Untermeyer discovered the choicest comment, which Mr. Legler apparently overlooked—"Whitman is the poet who brought the slop-pail into the parlor."

Griswold, who refused to put Whitman in his anthology, said that "Halleck must be pronounced not only one of the chief ornaments of a new literature, but one of the great masters in a language classical and immortal."

Keble's *A Christian Year* went through more than seventy-two editions in the 1820's and 1830's.

In 1833 Landor said, "Milnes is the greatest poet now living in England."

Jean Ingelow's illustrated edition of *Poems*, 1867, went through twenty-three editions in England, and sold over 200,000 copies in America.

### FURTHER REFERENCE FOR THIS SECTION

Pages 385-6, Whittier. See the incident of the man who threatened to shoot himself, in *Humor*, p. 98.

*PART V*  
THE POET AND HIMSELF



## IN ACTION

With respect to their capacity or incapacity for physical action there are disparities between the poets perhaps greater than in any other category considered in this book. At one extreme we have the swash-buckling, drunken, fighting, more or less criminal Elizabethans—Jonson, Marlowe, Greene, Peele, Nash and others—with their truculent survivors down the Bohemian ages; and at the other extreme we have the delicate flowers—Spenser, Dryden, Gray, Cowper, Coleridge, Hunt, Francis Thompson—folding their frightened petals at the prospect of physical impact. The one quality these two groups have had in common is extremity. Whatever they were they were to the utmost. They all bore in them the same poetic conceit, the same conviction that they were important men, the depositors of truth. Consequently, all their actions and their impulses were fraught with universal necessity. If they were by nature expressive, they must be extremely and spectacularly so. If they were by nature repressive of physical impulse, they must turn so utterly inward from the world that it grew dim around them, and they indifferent and irresponsive to its stimuli. The terms “cowardice” and “courage,” with their implication of the idea of character or will, are seldom applicable to the pugnacity and retreats of these unsocialized children. When a poet cowers in a crisis it is simply because he is *unable* to act. Or if he assaults a tiger or an emperor it is because he *must*. In neither case is he deserving of moral credit or blame. Incidentally, we find in this instinct for extremity the so-called “temperament” of the poets, their unpredictable moods and their angry inconsistencies.

The proclivities of the poets for physical expression or repression seem often related to the objectivity or subjectivity of their minds. But this is not always so. Landor and Byron were men of action and both subjective minds. Cowper was physically helpless, yet his mind was objective in

its capacity to identify itself with, to "fill," the objects of the external world.

Chaucer was once fined for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet Street.

Jonson called Shakespeare "gentle"; Scoloker called him "friendly"; and Henry Chettle said his demeanor was "no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes." But that "sweet Will" had some pugnacity is apparent from the story behind the characters Justice Shallow and Slender in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The original of the former was one Gardener, a Justice of the Peace in that part of Surrey where the theatres were located. His record is fairly complete and reveals an altogether infamous extortionist, briber, embezzler and blackmailer, but withal a wealthy man and a powerful magnate in his precinct. The original of Slender was one William Wayte, stepson to Gardener and his miserable and fawning tool. The other principal party to the quarrel was Francis Langley, member of the Drapers' Company, one-time practicing goldsmith, one-time incumbent of the office of Alnager—inspector of woollen cloth, more recently speculator in real estate and builder and owner of the Swan Theatre in Surrey, where Shakespeare was probably acting in 1596. The origin of the brawl between Langley and Justice Gardener does not appear, but there is evidence that the latter and his cur Wayte were very unpopular in their home neighborhood for various rascally extortions and persecutions of the natives. For whatever reason, he and the reasonably formidable Langley came into collision, for previous to 1596 Gardener brought three actions against Langley for slander, and Langley sought sureties of the peace against both Gardener and Wayte. There were clearly threats of cudgelling or worse, for in 1596 Wayte in his turn petitions for sureties of the peace against Langley, Shakespeare and two unknown women, "Dorothy Soer wife of John Soer," and Anne Lee, "for fear of death, and so forth." It is likely that the petition was *bona fide*, as it is unlikely that either Shakespeare or the two unknown women were appropriate objects for Gardener's practice of vexatious litigation for extortionate purposes.

## IN ACTION

When Ben Jonson was nineteen and with the Army in Flanders he accepted for England the general challenge of a Spanish cavalier, fought a duel with him in armor between the two armies, and killed him. Jonson was usually pale, but when he was angry his face turned dark red and his body swelled. His most famous and prolonged feud was with the effeminate Marston, who, during much of the campaign, was seconded by Dekkar. Jonson boasted of two skirmishes which may have been the same: one, that he spanked Marston in public and wrested a pistol from him; the other that he beat him and took his pen from him.

Donne, being mortally sick and knowing it, determined to preach before King Charles at Whitehall "upon his old constant day, the first Friday of Lent," which would be February 12, 1631. Seeing how emaciated he was, his friends tried to dissuade him, but he persisted, preparing the sermon in illness and remaining determined to deliver it, though as the day approached he scarcely had the strength to stand. He appeared like a skeleton in the pulpit and preached powerfully but in "a faint and hollow voice" on the text, "To God the Lord belong the issues of death." After the service he hastened home to the Deanery and never left it.

Milton was not a man of physical action, but his rages, escaping through journalistic channels, were terrific. His vituperation in the pamphlets replying to the royalist pronouncements, the *Defensio Regia* and the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor*, was so utter and sincere, so abandoned and personal, as almost to imply a collapse of the moral nature. When Milton moved it was the Lord moving in him.

Marvell was "choleric" and made plenty of enemies. One day as he was entering Parliament he stumbled over Sir Philip Harcourt and in recovering himself struck Sir Philip. Some said he boxed his ear, others that he hit him three or four times with his hat. Anyway, Sir Philip struck back, there was a scuffle, and both parties were reprimanded by the Speaker to whom Marvell retorted "saucily." Sir Job Charlton moved "to have Marvell sent to the tower," but the thing was patched up, and eventually both parties declared that it was all in jest.

In the Civil War Suckling equipped, presented to the King, and maintained—at a cost of £12,000—a troop of 100 horsemen splendidly caparisoned. But no sooner did this “gaudy regiment” come in sight of the Scotch army at Dunse than they broke in a panic and fled, Suckling with them. He was much lampooned for this and, being detected in the unsuccessful plot to rescue Stratford from the Tower, fled to the Continent.

Rochester had the reputation of slinking away from street brawls, leaving his companions to shift for themselves, and the Duke of Buckingham said that he once declined a challenge to fight him. Yet he left a record for bravery in the Dutch naval war. In 1666, being twenty-two, he served under Sir Edward Spragge, who, “in the heat of the engagement, having a message of reproof to send to one of his captains, could find no man ready to carry it but Wilmot (Rochester), who, in an open boat, went and returned amidst a storm of shot.”

Dryden seems to have been a mild man, incapable of action, excessively timid before the prospect of any kind of personal encounter, even a verbal one. One day Bolingbroke was visiting Dryden, when they heard another person entering the house. Dryden said quickly, “This is Tonson (his publisher). You will take care not to depart before he goes away; for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and if you leave me unprotected, I must suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue.” The Duke of Buckinghamshire once wrote an *Essay on Satire* which greatly provoked Rochester and others of the court. Believing Dryden to be the author, they had him waylaid and beaten by ruffians. Dryden’s retort was that he deserved it for his other crimes.

The common feature of Pope’s many quarrels was labyrinthine intrigue, but within his physical limitations he engaged in plenty of open brawls with violence. Blackmore referred to him anonymously as “a godless author who burlesqued the psalms,” and Pope loudly offered a reward for the name of the author. He crudely and unsubtly exchanged billingsgate with Dennis who resented his satire on him in

the *Essay on Criticism*. The repercussions of the *Dunciad* were loud and long. Dennis's son called on Pope with the intention of thrashing him, but Lord Bathurst persuaded him to retire. Pope went about accompanied by his great dane Bounce, and also carried a pair of pistols, while continuing the war in *The Grub Street Journal*.

After Lord Tyrconnel had expelled Savage from his house, the latter lampooned him without reserve. At length his lordship—in Johnson's words—"was so much provoked by the wit and virulence of Savage, that he came with a number of attendants . . . to beat him in a coffee house. But it happened that he had left the place a few minutes, and his lordship had, without danger, the pleasure of boasting how he would have treated him. Mr. Savage went next day to repay the visit at his own house; but was prevailed on, by the domesticks, to retire without insisting upon seeing him."

Freneau took no active part in the Revolution because the sight or thought of actual bloodshed nauseated him. In other respects, however, he was a man of action, for he functioned successfully for ten years as master of a merchant ship in the West Indian trade.

Cowper's mildness was so extreme that I shall discuss it later, in the section on "Miscellaneous Aberrations."

As a boy Blake used to draw in Westminster Abbey, and the students of Westminster School pestered him. Finally one of them climbed up to a pinnacle where he was at work, and Blake threw him violently to the floor. In 1803, when Blake was living at Felpham, he one day saw a drunken soldier in the garden where Milton and Oolon had previously appeared to him. He first asked the soldier politely to leave, and on the latter's impudent refusal seized him by the elbows and ran him out of the gate. There the soldier "put himself in a posture of defiance, threatening and swearing," whereupon Blake rushed out of the garden, "putting aside his blows," seized him again by the elbows and ran him furiously back to his quarters.

There is on record no spontaneous or courageous physical act by Wordsworth.

## THE POET AND HIMSELF

Though lame, Scott was always a man of action, one of the quickest and best fighters in school. On one occasion when he was mature he was in Holyrood Castle when tourists were being shown through. The guide, a woman, showed the blood-stain on the floor where Rizzio had been murdered, explaining that it had never been removed. There was in the group a travelling man, a peddler of a certain cleansing fluid. Immediately he jumped forward, knelt, whipped out his bottle and went to work. The guide protested but he kept on, apparently thinking he was doing a service as well as advertising his product. The woman screamed, and Scott, being in another room, heard it, rushed in, grasped the crisis, pitched the miscreant out of the room, and was rewarded with the freedom of the Castle at all times.

Though no pugilist, Landor was undoubtedly the most inflammable and pugnacious man of action of all the poets. He was fired from Rugby for fighting. He was suspended from Oxford for firing a gun through a Tory's door. In Italy he was forever quarrelling with the government and with the British Embassy, and "was on terms of permanent misunderstanding with the police." Once, having carefully remembered to put the key of his portmanteau in his pocket, when he came to board the Italian train he could not find the portmanteau itself, and raged about the station accusing all the local agents and the highest officials of the railroad of having stolen it. Later it was found in his house where he had left it. After a short residence at Como he fell into an altercation with his next-door neighbor, the Crown Princess Charlotte, over alleged trespasses by her servants. "The insolence of her domestics," said Landor, "was only equalled by the intolerable courtesy of her majesty when she was appealed to in the matter." At length, getting no satisfaction, he threatened to thrash a local Italian magistrate to whom he had appealed, and quit the place, "discharging Latin verses." He lived for a time in the Medici Palace in Florence, until he fancied that his landlord, the Marquis de Medici, had lured away his coachman. He wrote a letter of complaint, and the next day the marquis came to his apartment, entering with his hat on in the presence of Mrs. Lan-

dor. "He had scarcely advanced three steps from the door, when Landor walked up to him quickly and knocked his hat off, then took him by the arm and turned him out. You should have heard Landor's shout of laughter at his own anger when it was all over. . . ." The Italians thought Landor the ideally mad Englishman. On one occasion he threw his cook out of the kitchen window, and immediately stuck his own head out after him, exclaiming, "Good God, I forgot the violets!" When he was moving into the Villa Gherardesca at Fiesole he had some plate stolen. He immediately applied to the police, at the same time reminding them of their own incompetence and corruption. He was ordered to leave Tuscany and retreated as far as Lucca. Thence he wrote a courteous letter to the Grand Duke and, others interceding for him, he was permitted to return. Having well settled, he almost fought a duel with a French neighbor over a matter of water supply. The controversy ended in a law suit which lasted eleven years, Landor's brief on the final appeal comprising a quarto pamphlet of 112 pages. At length he alienated himself from his wife and children by his rages, returned to England alone at sixty, and was much petted by a group of young ladies. Two of them engaging in a quarrel over him, he plunged into it with his world-shaking fury. He was persuaded to apologize, but published libels against some of the parties in his next book of verse. An action was brought against him and he returned to Florence at eighty-three. Here one of his last quarrels was with Swinburne, who pilgrimaged to Italy to worship him. Landor had retained part or all of his big collection of notoriously bad pictures, including numerous reproductions which he insisted were originals. As was his habit, he proposed to give one of these to Swinburne, a large one, a supposed Correggio. Swinburne politely declined, having no means of transporting the object of art. Landor turned purple with rage. "By God, sir, you shall!" Swinburne did.

Once when Byron was a boy and the quack Doctor Laverdar was trying to straighten his crooked foot, his tutor said to him, "Such pain as I know you must be suffering, my

lord!" "Never mind, Mr. Rogers," replied the boy, "you shall not see any signs of suffering in *me*." When he was seventeen he saved his friend Eddleston from drowning. Somewhat later, "in the light of a single wavering candle-flame Byron and Mr. Chaworth fought with swords across the table of the Star and Garter Tavern, as the result of a dispute as to which had the more game on his estate." Yet the fighter in him was from the beginning frustrate by that same club-foot and the consequent awkward gait. Only at the end of his life the man of action asserted itself, and it is probable that, had he lived, he would have done gallant and foolhardy service in the cause of Greece. In January, 1824, the Turks blockaded Missolonghi where Byron was awaiting the chance to get into action. A night attack was planned against them in boats to be manned by volunteers. "Byron took the matter in hand, and insisted on joining personally in the expedition. From this he was dissuaded . . ." and in the end it happened that the Turks suddenly abandoned the blockade.

At Eton Shelley generally avoided "rough and boisterous pastimes," but he showed immediate and abandoned violence toward anything that crossed his will. His first reaction was to throw anything handy at his assailant. On one occasion it was a smaller boy that served as a missile. In fisticuffs he was not formidable for it seems never to have occurred to him to fight otherwise than with open hands. The only prearranged meeting of his on record was at Eton, with the little baronet Sir Thomas Styles. Shelley was tall and loose-jointed, his antagonist short and thick-set. The first two rounds seem to have passed without serious casualty. At the opening of the third round Shelley "stalked around the ring . . . spouting one of the defiant addresses usual with Homer's heroes when about to commence single combat." Whereupon he was badly beaten up and fled. At the lakes, when Shelley was twenty, he and Harriet were attacked by robbers in their cottage, and Shelley was knocked down. The following year they were living in a cottage at Tanyralt, Wales, and Shelley discovered that the sheep of

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one Robin Pant Evan, a rough farmer, which grazed in the pasture above his cottage, were "beset by scab or other disease." This aroused Shelley's humanitarian sympathies, and with the pistols which he always carried he began methodically to put them out of their misery. Robin Pant Evan, learning that this good work was in process, seems to have taken a different view of the matter. On a wild night he gathered a few stalwart retainers and attacked Shelley's house, opening the siege with a random bullet through the window. Shelley charged downstairs with his pistols. One of them misfired. The invaders leaped on him and got him down when, the other pistol going off without damage, they fled out into the storm. Shelley and his servant then stood guard all night, the pistols again loaded and cocked. At four in the morning an arm came through a window, fired at Shelley, and tore his dressing gown. Again Shelley's pistol missed fire. He seized a sword and struck at his assailant through the window, but the man got hold of his arm and was about to wrest the weapon from him when Shelley's servant rushed in and again the attacker fled. The next day the Shelleys left Tanyralt for Dublin. Early in Shelley's residence in Pisa, when he one day asked for his mail at the post office, an English soldier, hearing his name, shouted, "What, are you that damned Shelley?" and knocked him down and out. When Shelley came to, he and Tighe pursued the man all the way to Genoa but lost track of him there. Much later Byron and Shelley and others engaged in a street-fight in Pisa with the Italian Sergeant-Major Masi and his company, on account of a supposed insult to one Taafe. Masi struck Shelley from his horse, but without injuring him, and before the affray ended Masi and several others were wounded. As a result of this affray Byron moved to Leghorn and the Shelleys to San Torenzo.

Keats once beat up a butcher boy who was ~~bigger~~ than he was and was tormenting a kitten, and got a black eye for his pains.

Whittier showed courage in escaping from a house in Plymouth, New Hampshire, leading a visiting English lec-

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turer, George Thompson, to safety, while the place was surrounded by a dangerous mob of anti-abolitionists besieging and threatening them.

Once when Mr. and Mrs. Browning were on their way to Rome in a carriage, he leaped out to intervene in a knife-fight between two ox-drivers. Elizabeth screamed but Browning got only his trousers slashed.

Longfellow was not without caution. When invited to accompany a party of high-brows on a trip to the Adirondacks he heard that Emerson was going to take a gun. "Somebody will be shot," he exclaimed, and refused to go.

One day Whitman was conducting his Virginia friend Conway through the tombs and a prisoner complained to him that his cell was foul. Whitman, quite unknown and in shabby clothes, walked to the Warden, reported the condition and added, "In my opinion it is a damned shame." Instead of locking him up, the Warden remedied the fault. At one stage in the political quarrel that resulted in his quitting *The Brooklyn Eagle*, he literally kicked a certain politician down the stairs. There was inconclusive evidence of cowardice in his altercation with George Arnold, *à propos* the War. This incident, with some discussion of his failure to enlist, is given in the section on "The Struggle for Integrity." But if Whitman recoiled from the notion of bloody combat, he showed himself otherwise a man of courage in his work among the wounded around Fredericksburg, frequently under fire.

Once when Morris was doing frescoes at Oxford and a workman annoyed him he hurled a fifteenth-century folio at the man's head, missed him, but took a panel out of the door behind.

Swinburne's ambition was to be a cavalry-officer, a flair which his father frustrated but which remained with him wistfully for life. He earned the respect of the Eton boys for his tiny dignity and quick and frenzied willingness to fight. When he was seventeen he climbed a supposedly unscalable headland on the Isle of Wight, just to prove to himself that he was no coward. As a little old man he bluffed down a big bully who threatened to beat him, and

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laughed at Watts-Dunton when he proposed to swear out a warrant. Swinburne had a terrible gift for vituperation, sufficient even to frighten away cabbies who protested they were underpaid.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

*In general. For practical actions and capabilities see "Struggle for Existence." For erotic expression and repression see "Love." Also see generally "Exercise."*

Page 393, Jonson. See also his duel, *Courts, Crimes and Prisons*, pp. 370-1.

Page 399, Keats. See also pugnacity as a boy, *The Young Egoists*, pp. 20-1.  
See also his emptying Italian food out window, *Death*, pp. 274-5.

Page 400, Whitman. See also his chastisement of a boy, *Courts, Crimes and Prisons*, p. 377; his altercation with George Arnold and his attitude toward the War, *The Struggle for Integrity*, p. 364.

Dorset (not mentioned in this section). For his intrepidity in composition see *At Work*, p. 217.

Coleridge (not mentioned in this section). For his dragoon venture, see *The Struggle for Existence*, p. 325. Spontaneous applause, *The Struggle for Integrity*, pp. 351-2. For his helplessness in love, see *Love*, pp. 428-30. For his first meeting with the Wordsworths see *Friendship and Sociability*, p. 125.

## LOVE

It has been said that there are only two real subjects of poetry, Love and Death. Of the two the former is the more frequently celebrated, and for this and other reasons the poets, those egotistical souls so frequently found in spindly bodies, have taken on the repute and the prerogatives of great lovers. When ladies hear that one of them is to be introduced in their midst, the pulse of mother earth quickens. For even as each poet knows that he carries the world potential in his soul, so each woman knows that she alone is the love that can mother that glorious offspring, that she, and she alone, is Beatrice.

From this reputation and this agitating effect of the poet

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in society, it might be suspected that he is a sexual paragon, that beyond most men he is qualified to satisfy ladies in the sheer and libidinous sense. But this inference, I think, would be as grossly flattering to the poet as it would be grossly misinterpretative of those same ladies' capacity for love. If the occasional nymphomaniac among women is looking for her salacious counterpart among men, let her search among ice-men and plumbers, among dignified generals and kings of finance; but let her avoid the frank and fraudulent eye of the poet. His desire is not hers to comfort. His pride and pre-emptive assurance is not of her world. From the mass of secondary evidence and the paucity of primary evidence to the contrary, the more plausible inference seems to be that the poets in the realm of pure lechery will frequently be found wanting and under-sexed. It is a truism that as the activity of the imagination increases, sexual activity in the physical sense declines, and the poet, perhaps more than any other kind of artist, is a man whose vitality is diverted into his imagination. Both the sexual and the so-called spiritual streams draw from the same neural reservoir, which Lawrence located conveniently in the great plexal ganglion of the midriff, and they are strikingly alike in their nervous accompaniments and consummations. Indeed they are the same at the source, for a slight release of one will usually induce the other slightly. But when the gates of either are fully and actively open, the gates of the other close and the flood pours all one way. The poet who is habitually alive to his job of identification with the world, while desire may be high in him and his imagination exquisitely responsive to what other soul his wandering eye fixes upon, yet the shift of the current into lust is not quick with him, his symbolic physical gestures will be of the lightest and most tender, and a minimum of coition will suffice him. From the point of view of good and pure Freudianism, imaginative activity would seem to be a perversion instinct with repressions and complexes. If sexual expression be the one fresh and clarifying wind in the unconscious sky, then most of the poets have been psychopathic, and their so-called spiritual pretensions but de-

fence mechanisms that were better eliminated from this muscular and self-animalizing world. It may be true that a proclivity for imaginative activity argues a strong sexual potential, a large reservoir of common primal vitality that might well be directed into the more carnal channel; it may well be that these poets, if they could be persuaded to give over their poetry, might vie respectably with ice-men and merchants and ladies who have happily found out what is the matter with them; it may be that Marlowe and Greene and Jonson and those naughty gentlemen of the Restoration were as big men in the brothels as posterity has come to believe. It may be that Donne and Byron had something more vital than charm to recommend them to their paramours. But of the actual, intimate performances of these people we know nothing at all. Only in the case of Burns is there justification of a suspicion of specially active lechery; and even in the case of Burns it will be recalled that his best songs were written in frustration. As for the rest of the important poets, the inferences are all against any high degree of sexuality in the stark sense. Spenser before his marriage was a frantic and frustrated man. It is certain that Sidney's Stella never "of her high heart gave him the monarchy," otherwise than figuratively. It is patent from the context that Shakespeare had little if any of either his supposed boy or his girl. It is conceivable that Milton, during his non-poetic, academic and political days, was, domestically speaking, a rather horrible and impersonal lecher; but he was surely not so in his early lyric time, or later in the period of the epics. Dryden was probably subnormal, and Pope impotent, Gray was notoriously afraid of women, and all of Blake's numerous adulteries were in the mind. Wordsworth and Coleridge were, each in his different way, unhealthily chaste. Shelley was a chaser of the ladies only because he got them confused with his idealism. Keats was a conventional knight of the middle classes. Mr. Lewisohn has said truly that what other peoples and races have disciplined themselves to obtain—namely indifference to sex—was Emerson's by birthright. Tennyson in his big pre-marital period was probably an ascetic. Browning was much

more promiscuous in sound than in fury. There is evidence of only one consummated liaison of Whitman. Swinburne in his most perverse period was probably chaste in act. Francis Thompson undoubtedly left the world as pure as he entered it. It is a subject concerning which the specific facts are difficult to obtain. Yet with the great general reputation of the poets as lovers, and with all the libido-chasing of the late Freudian black-washers, if there had been much fire there must surely have been more smoke. Lovers in their fashion poets have undoubtedly been. But the best, the most prolific, love for them has been the frustrated love. It is this, not stallion-like salaciousness, that has produced their great poetry. The anthology of love is mostly a cry of longing, and contains but few evening hymns conceived in the wide ease of satiety. If any lady is ambitious to be the absolute Beatrice, let her make up her mind to be no more than partially possessed. If she would truly conceive her poet's paradise, let her exchange with him one understanding look, then hurry home to die.

The poet's appeal, then, is not typically to the sensual side of women. No more is it to their maternal side. The boy poet, the frantic adolescent, in his first throes of lust and idealism, he indeed may be a helpless thing who needs arms about him and a bosom on which to rest. But the mature poet, be he ever so inept practically in this hard and predatory world, is no such helpless flower. He has the conceit of the prophets. He knows that he is the custodian of sacred fire. Though he may not know how to cash a cheque or to cross the traffic on the avenue, he has resources stronger than those who learn these gregarious gestures. If a woman thinks to protect him and permits her emotions to become involved on this basis, she lays herself dangerously open, for one day, discovering the shallowness of her motive, her poet will laugh at her. Shaw's *Candida* made the wise choice.

If the poets have not invited love in either the sensual or the maternal sense, if their concern with love has been somehow intellectual, it has hardly been a scientific concern. It was a peculiarly self-conscious sort of poet who could produce such essentially analytical books as *Women in Love*

or *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and even in Lawrence's case the intent was wider than literal and scientific analysis. It looked rather to the imaginative aspect of love, and aimed to create a cult in which sexual expression was no more than a ritual and a symbol. But no other poet has given the matter even so much rationalistic attention. Love for Plato and Dante, for Spenser and Shakespeare, for Burns and Swinburne, was a fact of nature, not to be analyzed as to its physical basis and moral function, but to be recognized and celebrated as the fuel of the imagination, the instigator of the spirit in its journey outward from the body to embrace external objects and the ideas behind them. The poet as poet is no psycho-analyst, no scientist, not even a philosopher. To the extent that he enters these fields he deviates from his proper calling.

The basis for the association of poets with love lies in the nature of imagination. The coming of the imagination upon absolute truth, whether in the short terms of a poetic phrase or in the longer terms of a finished poem, is strikingly similar to the sexual cycle; the accelerating certainty of approaching revelation, then the ecstatic dissipation and the resolution of desire. The sexual orgasm is the simplest realization of an absolute, and it is perhaps the dream of thwarted sexual consummation that first sets off the imagination on its quest for an analogous spiritual or sexless consummation. The sexual and imaginative processes are parallel from beginning to end.

But the connection is closer than analogy. Sexual and imaginative impulses reside in the same nervous bundle and are at base probably identical. The man who is to an unusual degree imaginatively aware of the world around him will to the same degree be sexually aware of the women around him, and this though he be relatively inactive in either direction. But when the sexual-imaginative person does become active in one way or the other, then, though he usually will be proportionately less active in the other way, any excitement of the relatively neglected faculty will stimulate the more active one. Thus if he expresses his vitality mostly in sexual activity he will be further stimulated in

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that direction by music or poetry or anything that stirs his imagination; while if he habitually expresses his vitality in imaginative channels, then any sexual stimulation—so long as it leads to no consummation—will intensify that activity. The poet, therefore, is peculiarly sensitive to sexual stimulation as a source of poetry, and his erotic desire—so long as it be rarely or not at all satisfied—becomes the chief source of his work. Thus it is, although poets are seldom very active sexually, that sexual passion is frequently the accompaniment of their creative emotion, and that love tends to become the commonest subject of their verse and the center of their philosophy. And once having admitted to himself the importance of love, the poet proclaims his admission with a terrible and convincing sincerity. Having discovered the key to the secret of the truth that he follows, he celebrates it unequivocally in a voice as loud as his talent. However inactive a lover he may be in practice, he announces himself in print a zealot in the temple of Eros; he inserts in the journals of literature a permanent notice of the hunger of his loving soul; and any maiden who yearns may read.

And reading, that maiden, if she be normally romantic of her commitments, sees herself elevated to the plane of her dearest and purest aspirations. Here is proposed no furtive and frightening lechery, no bestial bout in the bushes. Here is love envisaged as she would have it, in spiritual—nay, religious—terms. Like the poet, she finds her inmost conceit, her most cherished pretensions, identified with the highest goings-on, not only of a man and of men, but of the gods and the far-flung cosmos. She is able to associate such imposing words as “beautiful,” “holy,” “divine,” with her own special function in life, and she walks with lofty personages in her dreams. Her own erotically excitable fancy, like the poet’s imagination, is freed from humiliating concern. She is secretly vindicated and walks above the petty opinions of her neighbors. She breathes ambrosia and the stars are caught in her hair. She sees Venus in the mirror and hears the swish of a thousand prows breasting the blue *Ægean*. If the Byron or Swinburne who thus

glorified her should enter the room she would undoubtedly swoon. And any whipper-snapper poetaster who comes bearing their ægis may have her for a kiss and a delicate sigh.

Thus the poets of the past give credentials to the poets of each new generation. These last in their turn may pass by and leave these same maidens languishing. But if from their hundreds but one or two shall indite something permanent distilled out of love—a song of Burns or Moore or Byron, a sonnet of Keats, a *Blessed Damozel*, a *Laus Veneris*, an *Epilogue to Asolando*, then the future thousands of maidens will read and await their poets in the garden. The foundation of each poet's reputation is made not by his own acts, but by the tradition that clothes him. And however satisfactory or unsatisfactory he may prove as a lover, yet if he or one of his fellows but add something acceptable to the immortal erotic anthology, then the poets of the future are accredited and the reputation continues.

Thus the fame of the poets for love, while psychologically based, is built mostly of literature. The poets in their verse declare themselves great lovers, and with a vehemence that it is hard to discredit. And of corroboratory and hardly less importance in building their reputation is another form of publicity which, consciously or unconsciously, most of them have adopted. This is public unconventionality of behavior, open defiance of the accepted rules of philandering. Slight as their erotic experience may actually be, they have pursued it in the market place in scorn of ordinary decorum. They make a moral issue of their independence and refuse to be found skulking behind walls and hedges. Where the lawyer or the professor creeps to his assignation, erasing his footsteps behind him, the poet strides arrogantly in the highway, and one irregular liaison of his will be more bruited than twenty on the part of the man who adopts the conventions of decent concealment. Thus, between the symphony of love poetry and the exaggerated scandals of the biographies sounding out of history, it is small wonder, when some shy editor of the college literary magazine enters the salon, that the ladies look artillery at each other and the boldest of them rise and cross to him and take charge.

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Beside enjoying their artificially created erotic reputations, poets are sometimes validly congenial or attractive to women on any of several counts. Their unconventionality of ideas and conversation tends to give respectable ladies a little flutter of thrilling and decorous adventure. They are liable to be personal in their attitudes and judgments instead of abstract in the way of most men. They are liable—especially if young—to discourse seriously of love. And if things do come to an actively erotic pass they will probably be more delicate in their perceptions than the run of males who come home tired from the office.

But most important in qualifying the poets as lovers is a sort of boyish susceptibility which has characterized many of them long after their emergence from boyhood. They have gone about wearing their universal love on their sleeves. They have been in love with everything and everybody, and every lady has been pleased to interpret this condition as one of special and helpless surrender to herself. The poet is continuously eager to identify the truth in his imagination with the truth of things outside him, to *see* in their essence the objects around him and to communicate with them by means of mutual and telepathic understanding. When those objects, or any of them, happen to be human beings, that communication may at once be established, for the other human being has also in his nature at least some remnant of the poetic quest. And when the external object, besides being a human being, is also a woman, then the shift from imagination to sexual communion is always imminent. The masculine hunger of the poet is for the world and everything and anything it contains. The hunger of woman is normally for an individual human being. Consequently when the woman falls under the poet's eye and becomes for a moment the focus of his quest for truth in general, she takes that quest to be aimed at her in particular, and finds herself marvellously enlivened, integrated, relaxed and ready for mating. Thus it is that the poets, however adequate or inadequate their physical performance in love may be, yet are always making love imaginatively to anybody who happens to be in sight and so are sustaining that tra-

ditional reputation which, in imaginative and only in imaginative terms, they do deserve.

In these remarks I am, of course, not attempting a serious analysis of love, with all of its aspects which the poets share equally with the rest of mankind. From the record it would appear that poets have only rarely been great lovers, in the moral sense—that is, in being exclusively faithful and devoted to one woman who was at all times present with them. Their record for real, practical fidelity has been a little spotty, but whether more or less so than that of other men is a question that cannot be answered. Comparison is impossible for the reason that the records of the poets, with all their vagaries, are so much more notorious than the probably more or less similar records of others which are seldom reduced to print for the furtive and scandalous delight of the world.

Altogether it is strange that the poets have been, in the moral sense, such bad lovers, that a group of persons who have been specially preoccupied with love should have included so many individuals who have been, in one way or another, failures in their actual relationships. Why is it that these imaginative persons, so piercingly perceptive in many things, should have failed to put into satisfactory practice that human function to which they seem to attach such transcendent importance? The reason is precisely that the importance of love is transcendent to them; it is above tangible experience and practical concerns. It represents less their actual and personal relationship with some one person than their relationship to the whole world. Love is for them an idea, the moving cause of creation. A specific liaison, while indispensable to the maintenance of this idea, is yet not an end in itself, and its success or failure on its own immediate terms is not very important. Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Coleridge, Whitman, Swinburne and Francis Thompson—each had a lofty erotic idealism of one sort or another, an ideal too lofty to work, and each was in fact a failure in his sexual life. Of the great poets Wordsworth alone had no recognized erotic idealism. Only two of the great poets had, so far as we know, a workable attitude toward love. Keats,

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being interested primarily in sensational-ideational Beauty, thought little enough of love to subject it to the chivalrous conventions, and might therefore have made a go of it had he lived. Browning raised those conventions to the idea behind them, the idea of worship and service, and, being so constituted that he was able actually to practice love so conventionalized, became one of the greatest lovers of all time. In defense of the ascetic, promiscuous or otherwise extreme records of many of the poets, let it be remembered that their failure in love was due to the fact that they asked too much of it ideationally, even as they asked too much of life, with which it was, for most of them, synonymous.

Periodically there are cults holding the thesis that a little "lavender" is appropriate to the artist, and that poets *inter alia* are liable to be homosexual. Out of some 275 poets, something of whose lives I have read, only one, Wilde, was surely homosexual in practice, and only two, Shakespeare and Whitman, made themselves suspect by the frankness of their declarations in verse. Three out of 275 is not a very damning percentage. The error perhaps arises from the fact that a certain kind of poet who is at once endowed with great sensitiveness and cursed with a sort of emasculate manual ineptitude is often taken by the blustering world to be a homosexual. Such were Cowper, Shelley, Swinburne, Thompson and many others. In truth these men were farther from homosexuality than the big-thewed athletes who sneer at them. They—with the exception of Shelley—were so finicky that they could hardly bring themselves to the act of normal coition, let alone the embarrassments of abnormal intercourse. These effeminate-seeming poets are queer surely, but their queerness, insofar as it has any sexual phase, is more likely to be ascetic than perverted. Woman, and the love of woman, is for all of them identified with the moving cause of things. They are always baffling their ladies by elevating them to deific dimension before coming to bed.

As to Shakespeare and Whitman, I shall not enter the argument extensively. If either or both of them were homosexual otherwise than in the capacity possessed by most vig-

orous men for non-physical, passionate friendship, then their homosexuality was surely of the masculine sort which is said to have been current among the leaders of the age of Pericles. This was the quasi-paternal love of an older man of imaginative stamp for a boy of promising imagination; and incidental to this spiritual connection, caresses occurred and sometimes pederasty was practiced, there being in ancient times less taboo in these matters than modernly. But in the case of Socrates and Aristophanes this homosexuality, if it was practiced, was a purely masculine business, based not in sex but in friendship, and they all had their homes and families besides, in the normal fashion. None of these men, nor, so far as I have heard, any great creative mind that ever existed, was of the truly perverse homosexual type, the effeminate or "fairy" type, the physiological male dominated by female feelings and the desire to attach himself to a man. Whatever may be suspected of Shakespeare or proven of Whitman they were both male in mind and in the manner of their practice. There is no reason to suspect that these two—and surely not Shakespeare with his clear, impersonal intellect—were exceptions to the otherwise universal rule that major poets, even where they are women, are masculine-minded.

Chaucer's wife was Philippa de Roet, sister of Katherine de Roet, wife of Sir John Swynford, mistress and afterward third wife of John of Gaunt.

James I of Scotland got his first glimpse of his future queen when he was a prisoner in Windsor Tower. She was Lady Joan Beaufort and appeared quite suddenly and silently one day in the little garden below his chamber window.

Sidney's "Stella" was Lady Penelope Devereux, sister of Essex, the favorite of Elizabeth. After a five-year engagement to Sidney she married Lord Rich. Sidney, who had been very inattentive, then spent a year at the sonnets, after which he duly married Frances Walsingham.

When Shakespeare was eighteen he got with child Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior, daughter of a neighboring yeoman, and married her hastily, with only one publica-

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tion of the bans, because the season of advent was approaching in which marriage was impossible. Six months later Susanna was born and a year thereafter the twins, Hammet and Judith. Going up to London in his middle twenties, Shakespeare apparently left his family behind. A Restoration legend had it that he was the father of Sir William Davenant by the wife of the host of the Crown Tavern in Oxford, where he customarily "baited" on his journeys back and forth between London and Stratford. The identity of the dark lady of the sonnets has not even been guessed at. By the evidence of the sonnets themselves the Christian name or nickname of the beloved boy was "Will," and by the evidence of the dedication his initials were "W. H." He was of the high aristocracy, younger than Shakespeare, and his patron. It is not at all necessary to interpret the relationship as actively homosexual though there can be no doubt of the passion of Shakespeare's devotion. There are two factors in the seemingly realistic story of the sonnets which throw doubt on Shakespeare's active homosexuality in the matter: first, he urges the boy to marry; secondly, in the case of the infidelity, he is not jealous of the lady for having taken his friend, but has to struggle to master his jealousy of his friend for having taken his lady. Incidentally, he disliked the dark lady but was bound by her physical attraction, which argues a normal masculine condition. By his will Shakespeare, having long returned to Stratford, left his wife the "second best bed."

Ben Jonson got with child Jane Ashton, daughter of the host of the Moon Tavern, and married her. After a tempestuous married life both she and their son died of the plague while Ben was absent from London with the court. There is a legend that a certain husband was anxious to have a poet in the family and expressed delight when his wife confessed to him that Ben Jonson was the father of her son.

Fletcher was six years older than Beaumont and survived him nine years. They were both very large, handsome men, "lived together on the Bank side not far from the Play-

house," shared the same clothing and the same mistress. Beaumont presently married.

As a young man Donne was an ostentatious rake of the Court. When he was thirty-one he secretly married Anne, daughter of Sir George More. After sixteen years of poverty and mutual devotion, during which Mrs. Donne bore twelve children, she died, just after her husband had been ordained and had come permanently into easy circumstances.

Herbert was married three days after meeting his lady. Immediately "after he was made rector of Bemerton, and had changed his sword and silk clothes into a canonical habit . . . , he returned so habited with his friend Mr. Woodnot to Bainton; and immediately after he had seen and saluted his wife, he said to her: 'You are now a minister's wife, and must now so far forget your father's house as not to claim a precedence of any of your parishioners; for you are to know that a priest's wife can challenge no precedence or place but that which she purchases by her obliging humility; and I am sure places so purchased do best become them. And let me tell you, I am so good a herald as to assure you that this is truth.' And she was so meek a wife as to assure him it was no vexing news to her, and that he should see her observe it with a cheerful willingness."

Milton was afflicted by at least a normal susceptibility, but he regulated it so severely with his moral intellectualism that it is doubtful whether he ever found more than a momentary and carnal pleasure in his relationships with his several women. It was not always the illiberality of his ideas that stood in his way—in the matter of divorce at least his ideas were advanced; his trouble was simply that every action must consciously follow the pattern of *some* idea, and although the idea might at times permit emotional delight, it was still the idea that ruled and the emotion was never permitted to express itself in its own spontaneous terms. Milton, though Puritan, retained much of cavalier gentleness and sought companionship from women rather than slavery, intellectual as well as physical communion. In 1643 when he was thirty-five, he disappeared from Lon-

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don for a month and returned with a seventeen-year-old wife. This was Mary Powell, daughter of a cavalier of Oxford, the families having been friends for years, and Mr. Powell owing Milton's father some £500. From the day of his marriage Milton's life, theretofore peaceful, became calamitous. The Civil Wars were on. The Powells were Cavaliers, Milton of the Puritan Party. Mary was a gay flibbertigibbet, used to young gallants, and eager only for parties and pleasure. Milton introduced her to the spare diet and eventless household of a recluse, and gravely desired her, seventeen and uneducated, to be his intellectual companion. She probably married him for his good looks, he probably picked her blindly out of his carnal need, never doubting that she would fit into his intellectual specifications. Mutual repugnance appeared at once, and it is probable that the marriage was not at this time consummated—there is some evidence that the famous pamphlet on divorce was written or started during the honeymoon. Milton found her a "mute and spiritless mate" clothed in "unliveliness and natural sloth unfit for conversation." Mary stood him for a month. Then, in July, she got her family to write her to come home on a visit, and so went back to Oxford and refused to return to her husband. The Powells wrote Milton that, being Cavaliers, they regretted having married their daughter to a Puritan. Milton launched the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* against the puritan world and dedicated the pamphlet to the Parliament. But the Parliament was too busy with the divorce of King and kingdom to hear the roarings of an obscure scholar. Milton took law and religion into his own hands and began courting a Miss Davis, daughter of a doctor, and a "young woman of great accomplishment." It is possible that Milton might here have found his mate, but she held off from the scandal, and before long events in Oxford put an end to her prospect. During the two or three months following his wife's desertion Milton's party, the Independents, had supplanted the Presbyterians as the dictators of Puritan or Parliamentary policy. Their army, investing Oxford, occupied Forest Hill, the home of the Powells, who fled into the city. Be-

sides this domestic embarrassment Mr. Powell was now bankrupt, and altogether it was a convenient moment for this cavalier to recognize his son-in-law who was a member of the ruling group. It being discovered that Milton was about to visit certain friends in Oxford, the Powells contrived a plot with his hosts by which poor little Mary was secreted in a room adjoining the one Milton was to occupy. At a well-chosen moment she was thrust suddenly into Milton's chamber, fell on her knees sobbing, and begged forgiveness, saying that her mother had been to blame. Milton with "noble leonine clemency" forgave her and "received her at once," the emotion of the occasion being sufficient to last some twenty years and motivate the forgiveness of Eve in Book X of *Paradise Lost*. Two years and a half after the reconciliation, upon the fall of Oxford, Milton took over the maintenance of the whole Powell family, it being necessary for the purpose to take a larger house in London. The unfortunate Mary now lived submissively with her lord, bore him three daughters, and died at the age of twenty-six in giving birth to a fourth child who did not survive. Four years later Milton, being now forty-eight, married Catherine Woodcock, who, after fifteen months, died in childbed, and whom her husband duly commemorated as "my late espoused saint." Milton's youthful hopes of a happy relationship were now gone. Woman was a mere abstraction to him and, having at fifty-five blinded himself in the service of the state, he asked his friend and physician Doctor Paget to select a suitable wife for him. The lady chosen was Elizabeth Minshull, a competent person who efficiently cared for him and his family during the rest of his life. Upon his death he left his third wife about £1000 of which she voluntarily gave £100 to each of the three daughters of his first. Milton's relations with these daughters expressed the disillusionment toward women which their mother had brought him, and they paid dearly for her insufficiencies. He gave them no education, but taught them to pronounce the six languages he was master of, and so required them to read to him in his blindness without their understanding a word they read. The two elder daughters,

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Anne and Mary, used to connive with the maid to cheat him in the marketing, and they sold his books secretly. When Mary heard of his approaching third marriage she said that "it was no news to hear of his wedding; but if she could hear of his death, that was something." The acknowledgments of these girls for their £100 each received from their step-mother upon Milton's decease, still exist as a sordid reminder of the personal tragedy which a poet universalized into the chief epics in the language, the tragedy of the failure of a great imagination to adjust itself to the need of woman, and incidentally the pathos of three obscure girls who, like non-combatants, paid the cost of an intellectual struggle of which they saw nothing but the meanest aspects. Anne, the eldest daughter of Milton, could not write at all and made her mark. Mary, the second daughter, was able to trace the letters in a crude and infantile fashion, and misspelled her own name as "Millton." Only Deborah, the youngest, was able to make a legible though clumsy signature.

Denham's second marriage drove him temporarily insane.

Lovelace's "Lux Casta" and fiancée was Miss Lucy Sacheverell to whom he seems to have been deeply and tragically attached. Having spent his large fortune in the cause of Charles I, he went to France, served in the French army against the Parliament, and was wounded at Dunkirk. At thirty-one he returned penniless to England, was promptly imprisoned, and learned that his lady, having heard that he had died of his wounds at Dunkirk, had somewhat hastily married another.

Wycherly at seventy-five married a young girl, "in order to defeat the expectations of his nephew, and died eleven days after."

The Duke of Newcastle collaborated with his eccentric and industrious wife in the production of something over eleven full folio volumes of plays, poems, orations, philosophical fancies, etc. "Loving and flattering one another," they "lived on in their . . . magnificent way for many years" and upon the predecease of the Duke, the Duchess wrote his life, setting him something above Cæsar for abil-

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ity, and celebrating him personally as a paragon of gallantry, loyalty and affection. She also provided for their joint tomb, monument and epitaph.

Dryden at thirty-two married his senior, the Lady Elizabeth Howard. This inter-caste alliance proved uncongenial, Lady Elizabeth developing a foul temper and Dryden having back at her by inveighing against marriage in print.

Prior was a wench-chaser, and one of his sluts, whom he had installed in his house, stole his plate in his absence and ran away. He came near to marrying one Bessie Cox who kept an ale house in Long Acre, and whom Spence described as "a despicable drab of the lowest species." To her and to his manservant he left his estate.

Pope was disqualified for physical attentions to women because of his "little, tender, crazy carcass," and generally hated the sex because they couldn't overlook his deformity and appreciate his genius. He was so indiscreet as to make a passionate declaration of love to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu which immediately drew from her an "immoderate fit of laughter." Immediately he lampooned her as the modern Sappho, and when challenged on her behalf denied that Lady Montagu was intended. Pope's life-long love, undoubtedly chaste, was for Martha Blount, his childhood friend, who became virtually his housekeeper after his mother's death.

In contrast with Dryden, Young made a happy marriage into the nobility. At fifty he espoused Lady Elizabeth Lee, daughter of the Earl of Lichfield and widow of Colonel Lee. About six years later Lady Elizabeth's seventeen-year-old daughter by Colonel Lee married Mr. Temple, son of Palmerston, in Nice, and died "in her bridal hour." Temple died a few months after, and four years later Young's wife also died. This triple deprivation produced the *Night Thoughts*.

Gray had "not vitality enough to love a woman."

Churchill left his wife and formed "an unhappy connection with another female," the daughter of a Westminster tradesman, who bore him several sons.

From his thirty-sixth year until his death thirty-four

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years later Cowper lived in chaste and religious intimacy with Mrs. Unwin, widow of an evangelical minister. The repression involved was not the cause of his insanity, the first attack of which preceded this relationship.

Burns did not get as early a start as might have been expected. His inaugural love was at fourteen for a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass" with whom, according to the country custom, he was coupled in the labors of the harvest. She was thirteen and "my pulse beat . . . a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand, to pick out the cruel nettlestings and thistles. . . . It was her favourite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme." The song was *Handsome Nell*, his first poem. From that time he was continuously and fickly in love, often with two or three at a time; and his brother Gilbert reports that these "numerous connections were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty from which he never deviated up to his twenty-third year." His deviation at that time was due to a jilting by Ellison Begbie, daughter of a small farmer, a girl of little beauty but of great charm and intelligence. Curdled by her indifference he moved with his brother to the town of Irvine, intending to learn the trade of a flax-dresser, and here it was that he fell, in the language of Chubb, "under the malignant charm of a wild sailor-lad whose habits were loose and irregular." This diabolic person was, in Burns's more human view, "the only man I ever knew who was a greater fool than myself, where woman was the presiding star." So Burns's passions moved out into the dangerous region of maturity and the greatest love-songs in English germinated. He seems to have kept out of trouble for two years more, until 1784 when his father died. By the fall of that year he had the servant girl, Elizabeth Patton, in a delicate condition, and on May 24, 1785, he acknowledged his first-born, a daughter. But long before this, Jean Armour, "Bonnie Jean," had appeared, for Burns's affairs had an inconvenient way of overlapping. Jean was the daughter of a respectable mason and contractor of Mauchline. In the spring of 1786 her condition was apparent and, being summoned by the Kirk Session, she sent

a letter confessing that she was with child by Robert Burns. Before this, in the early stages of their meeting, Robert had given Jean a document of matrimonial tenor, perhaps a written promise to marry which, combined with the consummation, constituted a legal marriage by Scotch law. But Jean's father would have none of the poor tenant farmer, and destroyed the "unlucky paper." Robert was furious both at Jean and her father, and thenceforth the pair considered themselves single. On August 6, 1786, they were publicly rebuked in the Kirk along with three other similarly offending couples. Burns was planning to emigrate to Jamaica and Mason Armour swore out a warrant for his arrest, in order, for the support of the expected child, to get his hands on the proceeds of the Kalmarnock volume, just then off the press. In the nick of time Burns transferred all his property to his brother. On September 3, Jean gave birth to twins, Robert and Jean, and Robert *père* duly acknowledged them. Meanwhile he had been and was in great agony over Mary Campbell, "Highland Mary," whose unproven but probable pregnancy was only a month younger than Jean's. During the summer of 1786 she had returned to the Western Highlands to arrange with her family for her marriage to Robert. In October she was returning to him when she died, of either fever or childbirth, in the village of Greenock, and her baby was buried in the same grave with her. Her death terminated the projected emigration to Jamaica, which she was to have shared. This, the only fatality among Burns's amorous adventures, naturally affected him more deeply and lastingly than any of the others. In his lifelong concern over Mary and her memory all of his theretofore agonies of conscience seem to have crystallized and wept out their valedictory. As for the rest of the world, thenceforth he was done with maudlin conventionality; when he fell he fell gaily and celebrated the glad event with an appropriately joyous cry. One cause of the stiffening of his spine was the success of his book. He was somebody now. Mason Armour hinted that he might now have his Jean, but Robert, though still in love with her, ruffled his proud feathers, and rode off to Edinburgh where the rest of the intellectuals lived. Pretty soon

there was poor Jenny Clow in Edinburgh, who would never let Robert have the beautiful boy, though she was miserably poor and cost Robert plenty of worry and shillings. In the winter of 1787-88 there was the famous chaste Sylvander-Clarinda affair with Nancy Craig (Mrs. James M'Lehose), wherein Burns, though intrigued "through death and forever," stoutly protected a sentimental, pseudo-intellectual lady from the humiliation she had invited by seeking him out and pretty much swooning over him. Toward the end of March, 1788, having now an excise appointment, he left Edinburgh and, quite casually and with apparent inconsistency, married Jean Armour, who meanwhile had been in disgrace and destitution, "all," in Burns's phrase, "for the good old cause." The preceding June, 1787, he had visited Mauchline again, and Jean's parents had welcomed him not only to their house but to Jean—in fact, they had laid a trap for this now leading Scotch poet, as that same Scotch poet well knew. He accepted Jean and got her again with child, but under express denials of any matrimonial intent. And so back to Edinburgh, leaving Mason Armour so angry that Jean fled to a friend of Robert's in Tarbolton. In February, 1788, Robert visited her there, and so proceeded to Mauchline where he manfully bearded the Armours, *père* and *mère*, hired Jean a room in the village, and bought her a mahogany bed for it. So back to Edinburgh again, and on March 3 Jean was delivered of twins again, two pathetic, unbaptized anonymities, one of whom lived about a week and the other two weeks. So now on March 24, 1788, Burns left Edinburgh with an excise appointment in his pocket, returned to Mauchline, leased him a separate farm, and within a month of his return took his poor Jean unequivocally to wife. The inference seems simple. He was twenty-nine and tired of philandering. The winters in Edinburgh had taught him that fame was not going to make him rich. He was, after all, a farmer. In the spring of 1788 he first obtained the excise appointment for which he had long been angling, a job whose duties were perfectly compatible with running his farm. For the first time in his life he was able to settle down and support a family. He was bound by duty

to Jean. It was true that she bored him after the company of the capital. But she loved him and for a wife on the farm he needed not a bluestocking but a country lass. It was the obvious thing to do and Burns was now ready to do the obvious thing. Up to this time his irregular record included a child each by Elizabeth Patton, Mary Campbell, and Jenny Clow, and four (two pairs) by Jean. Thereafter Jean bore him four more in wedlock, and the barmaid Anne Parker contributed one which Robert brought home and Jean meekly accepted into the flock. He was always a devoted father, to every one of his children. But his work of population was now done. Presently he moved to Dumfries and became a more or less respected citizen. There were a few sparks but no further flames that have singed the record. If he had lived much longer he might even have lost his unique standing as the only really satisfactory, 100 per cent vital and unrestrained lover among the poets. In him the single vitality which underlies both sexual and imaginative impulse turned, to a greater degree than in any other poet, into the sexual channel. Sex was his life, and poetry therefore but a succession of songs, the expressions of frustrate moments, sad hiatuses in the course of passion. With the other great poets—Byron perhaps excepted—the situation was reversed. Frustration and consequent poetry furnished the tenor and pattern of existence and sex but interpolated moments of irrelevant expression.

In his late twenties Blake was jilted by a girl and became physically ill in consequence. One evening in a friend's house he was moping in a corner, when a certain dark-haired girl whom he had just met joined him and he told her his trouble. Her only comment was "I pity you from my heart." "Do you pity me?" asked Blake. "Yes! I do most sincerely." "Then I love you for that!" And they were married almost immediately. Catherine said afterwards that when she first saw her future husband that evening she came so near to fainting that she had to leave the room. She was an ignorant girl when they were married, but she became the ideal mate of his body and soul. "She would get up in the night when he was under his very fierce inspira-

tions, which were as if they would tear him asunder, while he was yielding to the Muse, or whatever else it could be called, sketching and writing. And so terrible a task did this seem to be, that she had to sit motionless and silent; only to stay him mentally, without moving hand or foot; this for hours, night after night." Blake, like Burns, saw only evil in the conventions, and advocated what amounted to free love. But conveniently for him his vitality in action poured into his imagination and minimally in the direction of women. He boasted of many adulteries but they were all committed in the spirit, and in physical deed he was a faithful husband. The simplicity of the relationship of William and Catherine appeared in the incident related by his friend Butts, who came on them one day naked in their garden; "Come in!" called Blake, "it's only Adam and Eve, you know."

In sexual as in other matters, the history of Wordsworth is the gradual metamorphosis of the radical enthusiast of twenty-three into the "country attorney" of thirty-five, the midway stage being that of the mystic and the great poet. Harper finds evidence that "Lucy" was a real child whom Wordsworth loved when he was eighteen and whose untimely death left a gap that nothing ever filled. When he was twenty-one, in 1791, Wordsworth went to France for a year and settled in Orleans. Here, in looking for lodgings, he met Marie Anne Vallon, "Annette," who was over from Blois to visit her younger brother Paul, the clerk of a *notaire* in Orleans. The Vallons were gentry, Royalist, Catholic, and penniless, and may well have had objections to Annette's marrying a Republican and a Protestant, equally penniless. The father was dead and the mother had married again. There were two older brothers, both surgeons as their father had been, both living in the family home in Blois, where Annette also lived most of the time. She was four years older than Wordsworth. No record remains of the courtship, but in the spring of 1792 Annette was already with child and Wordsworth followed her back to Blois. During the same period he was writing to his friend Mathews showing an anxiety to take up lucrative employment. It looked as if he were planning to shoulder the re-

sponsibilities of paternity, and it may well be that marriage was forestalled by the practicality of his potential in-laws. There were passages in the original manuscript of *The Prelude* which showed him at this time in the rôle of the exalted and happy lover. He still believed in the French Revolution. He still loved Annette. He was still the young enthusiast eager to take his radical chances against the world. In the autumn of 1792 he returned to Paris, and on December 15 was born in Orleans Anne Caroline Vallon, her father acknowledging her and being represented at her baptism by a proxy over his signature, which the clerk copied as "*William Wodswodsth, anglais.*" Six weeks later, at the end of January, 1793, he returned to England, and back on the home soil the conflict of ten years began. There were two causes for it, each aggravating the other, and it is idle to speculate which came first. One cause was that the rationalistic, pragmatic section of his mind awoke from his dreams of liberty to the bloody and futile spectacle which the French Revolution had now in fact become. The other cause was that he got cold feet about Annette; a strong attraction it had been—and no doubt remained—but what had that to do with the permanent plan of English life which he now began to formulate? Annette meant France and he was disillusioned of France. France meant Annette and, without admitting it to himself, he would like to be free of Annette. Thus French radicalism and Annette mutually helped each other toward aversion in his mind. Not that this all happened suddenly in 1793, but it began then. Annette wrote him now begging him to come and marry her, and assuming that he was coming. Harper thinks that later in that same 1793 he went, determined to do his duty, but that he got only as far as Paris. The Girondist faction with which he had sided was now out of power, and he probably witnessed the beheading of the Girondist deputy, Gorsas. Also, as an Englishman, he was himself in real danger of arrest and execution as a spy. All of this not only increased his revulsion against France and liberty, but it offered him a valid pretext for giving up his respectable intention. At any rate he returned to England, and Annette's last chances were

gone. From this time he seems to have taken a settled position, a position so strong that he could afford to correspond with her, to send her funds, even to go to see her, but without any further consideration of marriage. From Dorothy's *Journals* it is apparent that William and Annette were corresponding at least in 1795, 1796 and 1801. In 1802, when he was contemplating marrying Mary Hutchinson, "William wrote to Annette," and letters were received from her and from "the Frenchman in London." During February and March there was much correspondence with "poor Annette," and on March 22, "We resolved to see Annette, and that William should go to Mary." In July Wordsworth made one of those ironic gestures of candid indifference that characterized his mature attitude toward women. Being already definitely engaged to Mary Hutchinson he, with Dorothy, proceeded to the Hutchinsons' with the intention, understood by all concerned, of getting married. But, having stayed ten days without any action, he ricochet'd off to London, taking Dorothy with him, and so to Dover and Calais to visit Annette and the little Caroline, now in her tenth year. The visit lasted four weeks and seems to have been enjoyed at least by the Wordsworths. "We walked by the seashore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or William and I alone." Out of these walks came the *Calais Beach* sonnet, but against this one he wrote seven political sonnets, and it appears that he was less inspired by the presence and the fate of his mistress and "dear child" than he was by France's then subservience to Napoleon. The purpose was apparently to reach a final understanding with Annette and perhaps to make a settlement on her out of Wordsworth's then improved financial resources. On August 27 they sailed, and at Dover he paused to sit on the cliffs and look back at France "with many a melancholy and tender thought." Henceforth everything was calm and friendly, and one cannot but wonder whether Annette Vallon saw anything in the stuffy sage of 1802 to remind her of the young revolutionary who had seduced her nine and a half years before, whether she was not now completely reconciled, and perhaps a little thankful for her escape. In Dor-

othy she recognized a real human being, and the affection between these two henceforth seems to have been unfeigned. Early in 1814 Dorothy wrote to a friend that the girl Caroline, now approaching twenty-two, was betrothed to the "Brother of the officer Beaudouin whom I mentioned to you as having been at Rydal, and she and her mother are extremely anxious that I should be present at the wedding." It finally took place, however, in March, 1815, without any Wordsworth being present—a fine wedding withal, with many people of importance in the company. The bride is recorded as Caroline Wordsworth, her father, "Williams Wordsworth, propriétaire, demeuré à Grasmere, Kendan, Duché de Westmoreland, en Angleterre," giving his consent by affidavit. In 1820 the three Wordsworths—William, Dorothy and Mary—made a continental tour, and immediately on reaching Paris called on Mme. Vallon and the Beaudouins, Caroline and her husband. Caroline now had a daughter whom she had christened Louise Caroline Doro-thée, "after the English aunt who had always borne her a touching affection." What was more touching than Dorothy's affection for the "poor girl" was Caroline's own devotion to a father who, as far as she was concerned, was certainly in default. She had a superbly bound copy of the 1815 *Poems*, a crayon portrait of Wordsworth and other mementoes. Her children raised a monument to her in Père Lachaise with an inscription which reads: "To the memory of our mother, Anne Caroline William Wordsworth, widow of M. Jean Baptiste Beaudouin. . . ." So much for Wordsworth's one objective love affair, the affair of a young zealot whom the later laureate repudiated and whose story he erased from the autobiographical record so thoroughly that for almost a century the world was in ignorance that he had ever existed. Enthusiasm, objectivity and passionate love were now over. Wordsworth passed into his creative period. The passion that had been Annette's now seethed "in tranquillity," and what he wanted now was undisturbing devotion and perfect understanding to support his ego. All this he found in his sister Dorothy, who stands unrivalled in history as the greatest of the poets' women, the indispensable

condition without which neither Wordsworth nor his friend Coleridge would have left behind them much, if anything, that would be worth preserving. In 1793, the year of Annette's casting off, Dorothy showed her responsiveness to him in recording a picture of the young Wordsworth which it is hard to accredit in the light of the later, more familiar portrait. "William had . . . a sort of violence . . . which demonstrates itself every day when the objects of his affections are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, . . . a sort of restless watchfulness . . . , a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men." During this time Wordsworth's uncles and cousins considered him such a renegade that they were consistently keeping Dorothy from him, shielding her from his baleful influence. But in 1794, for the first time in three years, they are found under the same roof, at the house of a cousin, and thenceforth they were never separated for more than two weeks until Wordsworth's death, fifty-six years later. The story of her attentions, her sacrifices, her management of the *ménage*, her perpetual writing under his dictation, her annotation of phrases, images, subjects for poems, which he would lift bodily into his poetry, her sitting up all night and rising at dawn while he rested, her feats of endurance on those hundreds of miles of walking trips, keeping up with his long-legged, athletic pace: all this is recorded in humble detail in the *Journals*. She continued to serve him and his children until her mind softened. In 1849, when William was seventy-nine and Dorothy seventy-seven, Mary (Mrs. Wordsworth) told Crabb Robinson that almost his only enjoyment was in attendance upon Dorothy, who was then irrevocably "sunk in insensibility." He died the following year, and Dorothy lingered five years longer. Meanwhile Mary (*née* Hutchinson) had, since 1802, been more the Martha than the Mary of the family. She was born in 1770, the same year as Wordsworth, and was Dorothy's friend before she was his. In 1801 she visited them at Grasmere, and Dorothy records of a walk they all took together: "I came home first. They walked too slow

for me"; and again: "William and Mary walked to Ambleside in the morning to buy mousetraps." By the spring of 1802 there was some sort of an engagement, for Dorothy is found reminding William that he ought to go see Mary after having been out of touch with her for a month; so "off he went in his blue spencer and a pair of new pantaloons fresh from London"—and came back in two days. A few months later William recorded his reluctance at the prospect of marriage in the lines "Farewell, thou little nook of mountain ground"; and in July he and Dorothy set out grimly on foot to consummate the business. The Hutchinsons' place was entitled "Gallow Hill," and was near Scarborough, in Yorkshire, about forty miles from Grasmere. William and Dorothy loitered on the way, spending two days with Coleridge at Keswick, and two days with their old friends the Clarksons. At length they reached the prosperous Hutchinson farm where "Tom was forking corn, standing upon the corn-cart, . . . Mary and Sara and Joanna were at home, and the party was joined presently by Jack and George. Wordsworth was now in the status of knight come frankly to marry and carry off his beloved. Instead he lingered ten days, then went off with Dorothy to Calais and the month with Annette already noticed; then back to London and three weeks more of loitering, ostensibly on business; and so back to Gallow Hill on September 24; and they were married on October 9. Promptly after the ceremony the three of them set out together on the drive to Grasmere in a post-chaise, the groom achieving sufficient serenity on the day following his bridal night to indite a sonnet on the sunset, and the following day a sonnet on the captivity of Mary Queen of Scots. From the outset Mary seems to have cheerfully stepped into second place in matters of companionship, contenting herself with marital intimacy, child-bearing, doing her share of the housekeeping, taking dictation when required, and leaving to Dorothy her subtler ministration to their common lord and master. In 1803 William and Dorothy went off on the famous Scotch tour, leaving Mary at Grasmere with the two-months-old baby John. Thus Wordsworth showed himself pre-eminent

in that art of selfish men, to surround themselves with a harem of able and devoted women, guaranteed to give a maximum of service for a minimum of attention. Sara Hutchinson, Mary's brilliant sister, often joined the household and it was not infrequent, in William's later days, to find him employing at once all four of his women in copying or taking dictation—Dorothy, Mary, his sister-in-law Sara and his daughter Dora. Altogether it seems no overstatement to say that Wordsworth's chief demand upon women was stenographic. It is difficult to envisage the place Annette Vallon might have occupied in such a household. Without attributing to her any abnormal selfishness, it is still hard to believe that she would have been one of these faithful, gray, little English door-mice. She would have had something of her "William Wodswodsth" to herself, and would hardly have tolerated the pre-eminence even of Dorothy. With this alien *haute bourgeoisie* in the house there would almost surely have been hell to pay, and probably little or no poetry. The whole story would have been different if William had seen it through in 1793. Which he undoubtedly foresaw then, and we may suppose that Annette herself saw it in 1802 and found consolation for her loneliness. Quite incidentally Mary bore to William five children: John, 1803; Dorothy (Dora), 1804; Thomas, 1806 (died of measles, 1812); Catherine, 1808 (died 1813); William, 1810.

For Coleridge, sexual feeling, like any other impulse to action, was liable to go off in a welter of dreams. Late in life he complained, in his journal, "Why was I made for love, and love denied me?" The reason was that the little obstacles in the way of all relationships were to him insurmountable. When there arose the first practical distortion of the image of his dream, love had been denied him. The nearest he ever came to objective passion for its own sake was in the case of Mary Evans, the sister of a Christ's Hospital friend who took Coleridge home to visit his family in 1788, when Coleridge was sixteen. Thereafter he used to call every Saturday to take the three sisters home from the millinery shop where they worked. He gathered nose-

gays and presented them to his beloved with miscellaneous love-verses attached. He became conscious of dress and wanted to have a new pair of breeches. These were promising signs, but still only signs. It was only a delicious haze to "Brother Coly." He made no real declaration and closed one of his letters to Mary, "Really, I have written so long that I had forgot to whom I was writing." He recorded in his journal that he sought nothing of her except "the pleasure annexed to thinking of her." Mary's patience held for five years when, quite unexpectedly, Brother Coly received the intelligence that she had another beau. He stopped writing her and stewed for a year in impotent confusion, meanwhile floating without resistance on a new stream that carried him farther and farther away from her. This new stream was pantisocracy, the utopian scheme of Coleridge and his new friend Southey to establish an ideal commune somewhere on the banks of the Susquehanna River. A new sort of marital relationship was an element in the agenda, wherefore it was desirable that each pantisocrat should carry a wife along with him. Southey was engaged to and presently married one Edith Fricker, a draper's daughter of Bristol. Lovell, one of the converts, was married to her sister Mary. This left a third sister Sarah available, and what more appropriate than that this sister of two pantisocratesses should replace the defaulting Mary Evans in Coleridge's mind as "the elusive image to be caressed"? She was "comely and sensible," she was "plump, smiling, and imperturbable." She fitted excellently into the great scheme. And so, early in 1794, being almost twenty-two, he engaged himself to Sarah Fricker. Having made which serious commitment, he fled and sent Sarah no sign of his existence for two weeks. Southey reproached him for this inattention, whereupon Coleridge perpetrated one of those cowardly, play-acting, manly-pretending deceits which became his regular practice in his later days of thorough demoralization. He fabricated a letter which he said he had received unsigned but which he recognized as coming from Mary Evans. He implied to Southey that he had seduced her and stated that in the letter she appealed to his manhood

to stay in England and devote himself to her service. He added hastily that his "resolution" toward Sarah had never faltered but that he did want Mary as a comforter. He was now in a very sorry and very practical pickle. He rushed off to London and sent Mary the first real avowal she had had from him, including a frightened inquiry whether it was true that she was engaged to another. She replied that she was, and Coleridge immediately dedicated himself to a "virtuous life." He then wobbled a long time, neglecting Sarah, while the last embers of the pantisocratic scheme were quietly going up in smoke. He took a walking trip in Wales and once while standing at the window of an inn saw passing none other than Mary Evans who happened also to be visiting in the town. He wrote in his journal that he "sickened and well nigh fainted." But pantisocracy and Mary Evans having both evaporated, he had to attach himself to *something*, an institution or a person. Sarah Fricker's only qualifications were domestic, and so domesticity now flowered in Coleridge's fancy as the sound institution to resolve his uncertainties. Wherefore, yielding to the charms, not of a lady but of an institution, he married Sarah early in 1795. They set up temporarily in a cottage on the Severn, where Coleridge luxuriated in the fancy of being a conventional man, enjoying a conventional honeymoon, and where he hung the æolian harp in one of the windows and wrote the poem about it which he always considered his best. He planned to return to Cambridge and continue his great projected work of "Imitations" "with manly consistency." The mood lasted a few months. Sarah's "exceptionally even" surface began presently to bore him. He found occasion for little trips hither and yon. Having characteristically forgotten the expected date, he was absent when his son, Hartley, was born, but he celebrated the occasion in gushes of emotion and verse. Thenceforth things took an inescapably realistic turn. Familiarity brought Samuel and Sarah down from the institutional dream and confronted them with one another for what they really were, the most ill-matched pair in all the confused history of the loves of the great poets. Coleridge's shortcomings have already been suffi-

ciently emphasized. But on the other hand he was almost abnormally responsive to tenderness, and a very little of it was sufficient to make him give a reasonable imitation of a strong man. Even a moderately perceptive woman could at this time have made Coleridge not only a happy man but a devoted husband and father, and herself by the same token a happy woman. But Sarah Fricker was not moderately perceptive. She was dull, methodical, literal, indifferent to his genius, unable to give him affection and understanding, aware only of his practical helplessness which she resented. This in turn aggravated Coleridge's tendency to self-pitying impotence. He took all the blame on himself and sank rapidly into a pit of inferiority so profound that nothing ever quite redeemed him. His habit of leaving home to visit friends became his way of life. By eight years after their marriage he had virtually left Sarah for good, and thereafter never spent more than a few days in each year in his own house, this mostly for the purpose of seeing little Hartley whom he adored. Meanwhile his principal haven was Wordsworth's house and family among whom he found that sympathy and understanding which he missed at home. Here the ministering genius of Dorothy enfolded and protected him as it did her brother. The exuberance of his first meeting with them, seeing them far off, guessing their identity, and bounding over a hedge to greet them, was symbolic of the vitality she was always too selflessly glad to transmit to him. She saw his quality at once, gave him the faith in his genius that he needed, "and paid . . . for her power to do so in the melancholy vacuity of after years." Incidentally her *Journal* contributed some of the imagery for the *Ancient Mariner*, and *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*, and she was expressly the heroine of *Love* and the *Dark Ladie*. The nature of their obvious love for one another can only be guessed. Coleridge was perfectly capable of a love at once tender, emotional and chaste. On the other hand, Dorothy's entries in the *Journals* of trembling solicitude for him in his miscellaneous illnesses seem to go beyond friendship. On one occasion "dear Coleridge" had left for London: "I was suddenly melancholy, and could not talk, but at last I eased

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my heart by weeping—"nervous blubbering," says William." Whether or not this relationship was physically consummated, it is certain that Dorothy, with her almost pathological responsiveness, was fully awakened by it. And in 1806, she being thus fully awakened, Coleridge proceeded to transfer the heavy burden of his then wholly dependent affections to Sara Hutchinson, sister of Wordsworth's wife. To her in 1809 he dictated the several copies of *The Friend*, that futile sally into journalism which collapsed the moment Sara departed, "worn out with the nervous strain of compelling Coleridge to go on with his work." Sara was the last woman of consequence in Coleridge's life. There was gossip much later to the effect that he seduced Mrs. Gilman, the wife of his host and benefactor in London. The attribution to him of any conduct so spritely was a compliment, and though the rumor was probably false it was such as no doubt delighted him in secret.

When Lamb was twenty-one his sister Mary went insane and in his presence killed their mother at the dinner table with a carving knife. She was committed, and recovered her reason, but was kept confined until the death of their father soon after as an imbecilic old man. Then Lamb abandoned all thought of love and marriage, obtained Mary's release by swearing to take care of her for life, and thenceforth devoted his own life to her. But for one or two mild recurrences of her disease, her devotion to Charles was as touching as his for her. She collaborated with him in much of his work. They lived together thirty-eight years.

One evening when Landor was thirty-six he attended a ball at Bath and, seeing a very pretty girl there, declared, "By heaven! that's the nicest girl in the room, and I'll marry her." She was sixteen years his junior. By heaven! he did marry her, and was unhappy ever after. During the honeymoon he was on one occasion reading some of his own poetry to his bride when she suddenly extricated herself from his arm, jumped up and exclaimed, "Oh, do stop, Walter, there's that dear delightful Punch performing in the street. I must look out the window." Landor with his rages was a

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trial and his little wife became a shrew. Not long after their marriage they went to the island of Jersey. One evening he said he wanted to go to France. She allowed she didn't and taunted him with the difference in their ages. The next morning he arose at four and set out for France alone in an oyster boat. He was picked up and helped on his journey by some French fishermen.

Byron, whose name is sometimes coupled with that of Burns as a great lover, was no lover at all in the ordinary sense. He was, in effect, a sadist. Burns loved and forgot. Byron loved and persecuted. To be an absolutist or poet was bad enough; but to be an absolutist or poet and at the same time a man of action manqué, that was very dangerous indeed. Some one was sure to suffer in pseudo-active terms. The greatest sufferer was Byron himself, and after him those women who awoke in him the swash-buckling soldier, the scion and raper he knew he would never be. His early score for lady-killings was not very impressive, for his inferiority complex and resultant sadism were not yet developed. He had not yet learned to select accurately those whom he could most hurt, or those who most enjoyed having him hurt them. When he was ten, Mary Duff, "Highland Mary," scorned him and eight years later when he heard of her marriage he went into convulsions. When he was twelve Margaret Parker, his first cousin, gave him his "first dash into poetry." And at fifteen he fell in love with Mary Chaworth, heiress and neighbor at Newstead, the healthiest of his attachments and one that might conceivably have ordered his career. But she "saw little in the lame boy" and engaged herself to another. Possibly the inferiority complex dates from this jilting. Meanwhile the relationship was deepening between Byron and his half-sister Augusta. She was the one woman who held his affection throughout his life. Incest was the fashion in his family. His maternal grandparents were first cousins; his paternal Aunt Julianna married her first cousin; Augusta herself married her first cousin George Leigh. No matter who else was preoccupying Byron at any moment, he always returned to Augusta for understanding and peace. In 1812,

when he was twenty-four, *Childe Harold*, along with his own scornful beauty, made him the social and sexual rage of London. Spectacular among the consequent affairs was that with Lady Caroline Lamb, a loose minx compounded of drama, exhibitionism, daring and hysteria. Byron didn't want her much, but she determined to get him. Presently she began to visit him in his rooms, and when he excluded her, obtained admittance by masquerading as a boy. Soon after this strange battle of wills started Byron brought her a rose and a carnation long before the season for either, and handing them to her said, "Your ladyship, I am told, likes all that is new and rare—for a moment." She held him for three or four months, when he began to get really bored with the hysterics and histrionics. Ordinary indifference was no rebuff to her, and finally he wrote her the famous letter whose entire text was: "When, madam, will you understand that I am done with you?—Byron." In December, 1812, she burned him in effigy at Brocket Hall with village girls in white dancing around the pyre, while she, dressed as a page, recited doggerel lines of her own, and one by one cast the book, ring and chain he had given her and *copies* of his letters into the fire. All was now over, but a short time afterward, when Lady Caroline saw Byron at Lady Heathcote's ball, she made a scene with a knife, making as if to stab herself in his presence, while he stood with a knitted scowl and said with contempt, "It's only a trick," until they crowded around her, disarmed her, and led her away. His next noticeable liaison was with Lady Oxford, considerably his senior, licentious and generous, worldly and humorous, a matchmaker to society. By demanding nothing of Byron and amusing him, she held him for eight months, though not exclusively. Next it was Lady Adelaide Forbes. "Do you know," he wrote to Moore, "I am amazingly inclined—remember I say but *inclined*—to be seriously enamoured of Lady Adelaide Forbes." Thought of marrying her, he said, but "I am not well-versed enough in the ways of a single woman to make much matrimonial progress." "In almost all cases, opposition is a stimulus. In mine it is not; if a straw were in my way, I would not stoop

to pick it up." Having delivered himself of which wisdom, he not long thereafter began to get embroiled with a "single woman" who put many straws in his way which he might better have left without picking them up. Annabella Milbanke was a young lady of excellent family, a prim little intellectual with a head the size of a large pea, very moral, idealistic and ignorant of people, and in her own right a mathematician, a metaphysician and a poetess. "Any other head," wrote Byron, "would be turned with half her acquisitions, and a tenth of her advantages." After due conference with Augusta and Lady Oxford, Byron decided to steady himself by marrying this paragon, proposed twice, and was rejected twice. The truth of the matter was that little Annabella saw great possibilities of reforming Byron, but wanted to be very sure of him before she committed herself to the hazardous undertaking. And Byron, with his worldly eyes wide open, behaved partly like a fool in half-believing Annabella was qualified for this task, and partly—perhaps principally—like a pervert in seeing an almost unexampled opportunity for torture. Knowing perfectly what he was about, he continued to dabble with righteousness. Presently Augusta, in all sanity, persuaded him to offer himself to a more eligible candidate. But immediately after this proposition was rejected, he wrote Annabella a third proposal and showed it to his faithful half-sister. "A very pretty letter," she said, "it is a pity it should not go—I never read a prettier one." "Then it *shall* go," said Byron. And it did. And Annabella accepted him by return mail, and, being a competent person, sent a duplicate of her letter to London, in case the other should not reach him. Years later Lady Byron told Mrs. Stowe: "*At last . . .* he sent a very beautiful letter, offering himself again. I thought that it was sincere, and that I might now show him all I felt. I wrote just what was in my heart. Afterwards, I found in one of his journals this notice of my letter: 'A letter from Bell—it never rains but it pours!'" Naturally Byron began now to shilly-shally and worry and introspect like any young man who has got himself "suitably" engaged. But he honestly wanted to marry, and the fiendish perverseness was at

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work. On one of his visits to Annabella, she was so distressed at his moodiness and strange treatment of her that she offered to release him and remain his friend; whereupon Byron fainted dead away. They were married in the drawing-room at Seaham, June 2, 1815. When Byron pronounced the words, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," he looked at his friend Hobhouse with a half smile. They set off in a coach. There was no communication of any kind between them for an hour. Then Byron spoke these first words to his bride—"Madam, you will regret this." He grew more voluble, sneering: "Oh, what a dupe you have been to your imagination! How is it possible that a woman of your sense could form the wild hope of reforming *me*? . . . It is enough for me that you are my wife for me to hate you. If you were the wife of any other man, I own you might have charms." "He laughed over it when he saw me hurt." Poor little Annabella heard her new lord and master going on and on: "You *might* have saved me once, madam! You had all in your own power when I offered myself to you first. Then you might have made me what you pleased; but now you will find you have married a devil." The wedding couch was a great bed hung with crimson curtains which all night threw a ruddy glow from a taper outside. At last Byron slept, but Annabella lay awake. Presently he sat up with a start and shouted, "Good God, I am surely in hell!" Byron could never bear to see a woman eat, so his wife took her meals alone. They had not been married a month when he took her to see Augusta. Very early in the evening he turned to her and said, "Bell, go upstairs now—Augusta and I want to be alone." Later she once said to him, "Byron, am I in your way?" "Damnably," was the reply. On one occasion in London he came home drunk and threw himself in agony at her feet, calling himself a monster. "My tears flowed over my face, and I said, 'Byron, all is forgotten; never, never shall you hear of it more.' He started up, and folding his arms while he looked at me, burst into laughter. 'What do you mean?' I said. 'Only a philosophical experiment; that's all,' said he.

'I wished to ascertain the value of your resolutions.'"

Meanwhile she was nearing her time. Byron was harassed by creditors, was full of hallucinations from drinking laudanum, and was getting jaundice. Among his attentions to his wife was a habit of firing off pistols in her bedroom. His first word to her after the delivery was the question whether the child was not born dead, and when he first looked at their daughter in her cradle he exclaimed, "Oh, what an implement of torture I have received in thee!" Meanwhile he had had Annabella fallaciously notified that her mother was dead, and asked her to go home. She had him examined by alienists who pronounced him technically sane. Then she went back to her family at Seaham. It had been Byron's plan to compound with his creditors in London, then follow his wife to Seaham, get her pregnant again, and leave at once for Italy alone. But instead he was confronted with separation proceedings. At first he squirmed and resisted, writing Annabella in his best vein: "My errors, or whatever harsher name you choose to call them, you know; but I loved you and will not part from you without your express and expressed refusal to return to, or to receive me." But he finally signed the deed of separation on April 21, 1816; and he and Annabella were free of each other. Probably the real reason for her insistence was her knowledge of the Augusta relationship which was gossip all through the period of their marriage. She behaved splendidly, befriending Augusta in order to belie the scandal. Throughout Byron's period of demoralization that followed he continued to write Annabella from Italy, seeking a reconciliation. But even then, it was Augusta who got his real confessions. He diverted himself with debauchery in Venice, associating, in Shelley's phrase, "with wretches who seemed almost to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man." After a turn at this he became *cavalier servante* to twenty-year-old Teresa Countess Guiccioli, wife to a very old and very rich nobleman of Ravenna. If he was not happy in this relationship, he was at least composed, and it was by all odds the most satisfactory and normal liaison of his life. If the lady was stupid,

she was beautiful and passionate. She did not try to reform him. Annabella lasted ten months; Teresa over five years, and no Augusta either.

With Shelley emotion was emotion, one and abstract. He made small distinction between women, poetry, social justice and truth, each of them being a variation upon the one theme of his romantic idealism. He engaged in a long quest for the "perfect union," but allowed to physical attraction as such no place in his ideal scheme; a woman who aroused him—and very many did—got from him small recognition of her personal charms. Rather she became at once the "sister of his soul," his companion in the crusade against tyranny and the quest for the eternal secret. His conscious purpose toward her was not to seduce her but rather to liberate her from something or other, and the sure way for a woman to win Shelley's attention was to notify him that she was "oppressed." The remarkable thing about Shelley was that, being entirely dominated by his imagination, he was still so physically active. Unlike Coleridge, action was easy for him, thoughtless, spontaneous, almost automatic. When he saw a new "sister of his soul" he cohabited with her as quickly and as thoughtlessly as he breathed. And this capacity for direct action, coupled with a roving imagination and released by disregard of convention, made him, in spite of mental abstractedness, a pretty formidable man with the ladies. As in the case of Byron, it is probable that Shelley's first love largely determined the strange course of his life. This important attachment was for his cousin, Harriet Grove, notable for a pink-and-white complexion. In 1810, when he was eighteen and they were engaged, Harriet showed some of his letters to her parents who at once required her to break the engagement on account of the "tone" of these dangerous documents "on speculative subjects." This was Shelley's first collision with the world. Having before been moderately liberal and skeptical, he now went violently anti-everything, determined to make war on all "superstition" and to "crush the wretch"—i.e., the laws of church and state respecting marriage—and generally to play havoc with society. It became his dearest

ambition to bring together his sister Elizabeth and his friend Hogg "without benefit of clergy," but Elizabeth failed to acquiesce in this ideal experiment. Meanwhile Harriet Grove became engaged to and married a Mr. Heyler, and Shelley immediately opened correspondence with his second Harriet, Harriet Westbrook, whom he fortuitously met at just the moment of susceptible rebound. She was the daughter of the well-to-do retired proprietor of a London coffee-house and was the school friend of one of Shelley's sisters. She was a light, active, graceful girl with a delicate pink-and-white complexion like her predecessor. She had regular features, a pleasant voice, a frank and cheerful manner, and light brown hair which Shelley especially admired. Physically she was the most beautiful of Shelley's three important attachments. In the autumn of 1811 there arose the dangerous issue of "tyranny." Harriet wrote Shelley who was in Wales of her father's "persecution" in compelling her back to a school where she had been reprimanded for associating with Shelley. That enemy of society replied, counselling resistance. Harriet wrote that resistance was impossible but that she would fly with him. Shelley was always impulsively chivalrous. He wrote to Hogg: "We shall have £200 a year; when we find it run short, we must live, I suppose, on love! *Gratitude and admiration* all demand that I should love her forever." These, and not a unique attraction, either physical or mental, were the insufficient bases of the tragic gesture that followed. He at first intended only the illicit and natural relationship of his social theories, but when Harriet hesitated he consented to marriage because of the "disproportionate sacrifice" of the female in a mere union of "love and honour." He told her that he regarded marriage as a mere ceremony, and that he would live with her no longer than he liked her. It was impossible for a youth of nineteen and a girl of sixteen to marry in England without their parents' consent; so they eloped to Edinburgh and got somewhat dubiously married, the minister being a professional in this kind of business who did not hesitate to falsify needful documents attesting that Harriet had lived in the parish for six weeks and that

the bans had been duly published in the churches. About a month after the marriage Shelley left his little bride for a few days under the protection of his faithful friend, Hogg, who seized the opportunity to try to seduce her and succeeded in making her ill from revulsion. Meanwhile, all during this courtship and for a year and a half after the wedding, Shelley engaged in the most incongruous of all his follies. There was a certain Miss Elizabeth Hitchener, a school teacher and an old maid, a plain woman and, by her behavior, a stupid one. Bewildered, fluttering, scheming, sly in the manner of the provincial hussy, she found herself one of the first of Shelley's "sisters of his soul." From her letters it does not appear that she had the slightest appreciation either of Shelley's ideation or of his unique flavor as a person. To her he was simply a young man of good family who said outrageous and exciting things. It was too thrilling! Naturally she laid her heavy-meshed nets for him. Here is Shelley writing to this siren shortly after his wedding: "*You . . . whose views are mine, I will dare to say I love. . . . I love you more than any relation; I profess you are the sister of my soul, its dearest sister, and I think the component parts of the soul must undergo dissolution before its sympathies can perish.*" In the same letter he proposed to share his estate with this angular Aspasia. Later he suggested that they collaborate in a series of essays and tales in which he would show the causes of the failure of the French Revolution and would also notice "some of the leading passions of the human mind. . . . I design to exclude the sexual passion and think the keenest satire on its intemperance will be complete silence on the subject." How deliciously Miss Hitchener, reading that, must have dropped her eyes to the floor of her chamber! In the winter of 1812-13 she made a final, bold play, having lost her job as a teacher in the town of Hurstperpoint because of her association with this sinister youth. She visited Shelley and Harriet for four months in London. Nothing could have been more fatal to her than to be seen and known. Since Shelley had no humor, her fall below what she really was was as profound as her elevation had been absurdly above it.

This late sister of his soul became a "brown demon," a "tormentress," an "artful, superficial, ugly, hermaphroditical beast of a woman"—which meant that since she had emerged from his imagination into fact she didn't attract him any more. Having been the cause of her losing her job, he now pensioned her at £100 a year, and immediately fell into correspondence with Fanny Imlay, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft by Gilbert Imlay and a sort of outcast in the household of William Godwin, paragon of philosophers. If Miss Hitchener was too crass, this girl was too sensitive to support the hard duties of the spiritual sisterhood. She fell selflessly and helplessly in love. Three years and a half later in the autumn of 1816 she quietly committed suicide with laudanum. Her moment in the sun was only a few weeks. Shelley began to find more excitement in corresponding with Cornelia Boinville, later Mrs. Turner. And the real significance of all these collateral soul-sisters was that Harriet had never, not even for a moment at the outset, really possessed her elusive husband. Shelley did appreciate her quality, but he found in her neither a continuing attraction nor stimulating companionship. He sincerely blamed himself for this insufficiency, and adopted the desperate and shallow expedient of begging Harriet "to pity him if she could not love him." He proposed a suicide pact, she to take an overdose of laudanum, he to shoot himself. Don't let it ever be thought that Shelley left Harriet lightly. In June, 1813, was born Ianthe Elizabeth. Shelley loved her and paced the room carrying her, singing a monotonous lullaby of his own composition. He was always a devoted father. The following summer, that of 1814, was full of drama. In order to insure the legitimacy of Ianthe, Shelley and Harriet were remarried. The death motif sounded when Shelley began to have secret meetings with Mary Godwin, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin, the philosopher whom Shelley admired above all contemporary minds. Mary came close to possessing the requirements for Shelley's "perfect union." She was born an intellectual, the daughter of a brilliant, free-thinking woman, and she had been brought up in the continuous presence of her

father's friends, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb and the rest. At the outset Mary, "book in hand," used to meet Shelley at her mother's grave in Old St. Pancras churchyard and, whether artfully or naïvely, adopted the sure-fire tactics of narrating the persecution she suffered at the hands of her stepmother, the second Mrs. Godwin. Shelley could not stand secrecy long. He told Harriet he was in love with Mary, whereupon she went directly to old Godwin and his wife and reported this intelligence. Then Mary and her stepsister Claire Clairmont called on Harriet at her father's house and Mary promised she would "have none of Shelley's love." No doubt she meant it, but she had reckoned without Shelley. When he learned of the promise he rushed to Godwin's apartment and thrust his way through a cordon of determined women into Mary's presence. "They wish to separate us, my beloved," he shouted, "but death shall unite us. By this" (whipping out a bottle of laudanum) "you can escape from tyranny and this" (drawing a pistol from his pocket) "will unite me to you." Mary can hardly be blamed that her "resolution was shaken"; she calmed Shelley by promising to be his forever. Peacock has described Shelley's state in those days of conflict between loyalty to Harriet and passion for Mary: "Eyes . . . bloodshot, hair and dress disordered. He caught up the laudanum bottle and said, 'I never part from this.'" A week after the big scene with Mary, Shelley took an enormous overdose and was found almost dead in his apartments. The nasty element in the complication, and the fact that renders Shelley's action *at this time* surely inexcusable, was that Harriet, in July, 1814, was already in her sixth month with his second child. This, no doubt, was the cause of the extremity of his agony, but in the upshot it did not deter him. He now proposed to Harriet that she and he and Mary should all set up together, but Harriet refused on the grounds of the failure of the Hitchener experiment of the previous year. Shelley went into a nervous break-down, and persuaded himself that Harriet's refusal to live *à trois* was selfish and relieved him of his duty to her. On July 28, 1814, he and Mary and Claire Clairmont left London in a post chaise for Dover.

Being afraid of pursuit, they did not wait for the packet but hired a smack for Calais, leaving their baggage to follow. It was a hot night when they started, then a violent storm came up. While the lightning flashed, Mary rested peacefully in Shelley's arms, oblivious to the danger, which was real. They grounded on Calais beach in the morning, and not long after them came the packet bringing not only their baggage but the angry Mrs. Godwin, determined to carry her daughter Claire back from this immoral company. But Claire had a will of her own and the old lady went back alone. So the elopement continued. Beyond Paris Shelley bought a mule to carry Mary while he and Claire walked. The mule went lame and Shelley tried to carry it. Then he sprained his own ankle and they exchanged the mule for a carriage and driver. Three weeks after the elopement Shelley wrote to Harriet, proposing that she come and live with them in Switzerland. About a month later they returned, having run out of money. On November 30 Harriet gave birth to Shelley's second child, Charles Bysshe. He went to see the baby, but showed no tenderness for Harriet. This boy died in 1826, when he was twelve. After this sort of posthumous birth the next item of interest was Mary's delivery, toward the end of February, 1815, about seven months after the elopement, of a daughter who lived only two weeks. From which it appears that Shelley may have known that Mary was pregnant by him at the time of his critical struggle, and this very faintly mitigates his cruelty in leaving Harriet. From early 1815 Harriet was seriously considering suicide, having succumbed to a morbid sense of failure; she became obsessed with the notion that every one was very good to her and that she was not adequately repaying any one; while in fact she was being wronged by Shelley, by his family who snobbishly refused to see her, and finally by her own. Her father was dying and her sister Eliza—perhaps coveting the incipient inheritance for herself—made Harriet feel uncomfortable in the house. So in September, 1816, she quietly went away and took obscure lodgings. On November 9 she wrote a pathetic letter to her sister, enclosing a message to Shelley

in which she begged him to let Eliza keep Ianthe. Nothing was heard from her again. On December 10 her body was found in the Serpentine. *The Times* published a false and cruel statement that she was pregnant. Shelley played the complete cad by writing Mary that Harriet had taken to prostitution just before her death. Immediately he and Mary were married, at the special urge of Godwin, that philosopher, that condemner of marriage, who now set about boasting of the fine match his daughter had made. Meanwhile Mary had had a second child, a boy named William, after Godwin. They went abroad again and returned in 1817, Claire Clairmont still with them, the silly girl having at last succeeded in getting herself pregnant by Byron. The noble father disclaiming all responsibility in the matter, Shelley hid her and saw to her delivery. As soon as he was known to be in England the Westbrooks brought suit against him for the possession of Harriet's children, and although the latter were put in the hands of a guardian named by Shelley, the Westbrooks did succeed in removing them from his control and society. After a year in England Shelley took his family—there was now a daughter, Clara—out of the country for good. While they were visiting Byron in Venice Clara died; the following year the boy William died in Rome, and Shelley sank into prolonged despondency. It seems that Mary had now had her day. In Naples Shelley stooped to an affair with Claire Clairmont. They settled in Pisa and once more there began the quest for the ideal. Most important in the new parade of sisters of Shelley's soul were Emilia Viviani, daughter of Count Viviani by his first wife and imprisoned by his second wife in a convent, and Jane Williams, guest of the Shelleys. But Shelley had not the old zest now, and he began to doubt the possibility of finding the perfect union. He confessed: "I think one is always in love with something or other; the error . . . consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal." With the collapse of the erotic idea, his promiscuity showed signs of abating, for carnal desire, without the sanction of an ideal, was not sufficient motive for him. In 1822, being in his thirtieth year, he

began to see that his costly dream had been a delusion. He sank into a torpor and said, "I can write nothing." He projected a trip to some remote land alone. And in July of that year he "solved the great mystery."

Unlike Shelley, Keats was potentially a great lover, for his interests and perceptions were all personal and particular. But, again unlike Shelley, he was a conventional young man. As such he did not consider "ladies" frankly as potential lovers, and so came to have a conventional condescension toward them as "children to whom I would rather give a sugar Plum than my time." Fanny Brawne was a beautiful, loyal, witty and highly educated girl, and Keats tortured her and virtually maddened himself by failing to seduce her at the outset—they met and became engaged in the late autumn of 1818. After his first hemorrhage over a year later several of his letters to her were insulting in their display of psychopathic jealousy.

In 1821, Bryant, being then twenty-five years old, wrote to his mother as follows: "Dear Mother: I hasten to send you the melancholy intelligence of what has lately happened to me. Early on the evening of the eleventh day of the present month I was at a neighbouring house in this village. Several people of both sexes were assembled in one of the apartments, and three or four others, with myself, were in another. At last came in a little elderly gentleman, pale, thin, with a solemn countenance, pleuritic voice, hooked nose, and hollow eyes. It was not long before we were summoned to attend in the apartment where he and the rest of the company were gathered. We went in and took our seats; the little elderly gentleman with the hooked nose prayed, and we all stood up. When he had finished most of us sat down. The gentleman with the hooked nose then muttered certain acabalistic expressions, which I was too much frightened to remember, but I recollect that at the conclusion I was given to understand that I was married to a young lady by the name of Frances Fairchild, whom I perceived standing by my side, and I hope in the course of few months to have the pleasure of introducing to you as your daughter-in-law, which is a matter of some interest

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to the poor girl, who has neither father or mother in the world."

Emerson married Ellen Tucker when he was thirty, and she seventeen and consumptive. In two years she died, leaving him \$20,000. After another two years he married Lydia Jackson of Plymouth and they drove back together from Plymouth in Emerson's chaise. He called her Lidian and she bore him four children.

On a July afternoon in 1861 Longfellow was reading to his wife and two daughters, Mrs. Longfellow occupied the while with sealing up certain envelopes containing samples of the little girls' curls. A drop of burning wax fell on her light dress which immediately blazed up. Longfellow finally smothered the blaze but his wife died from her burns the following morning and Longfellow was himself so burned that he could not attend the funeral.

When the bachelor Whittier was forty-eight Whitman sent him the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* which the "Sage of Amesbury," having read a few of its frank lines, threw angrily into the fire.

Poe is generally accredited with a mother complex. His first love was Mrs. Jane Stith Stanard, mother of one of his play-mates in Richmond, and sixteen years his senior. She became "Helen" and the one he never forgot. She died insane when he was fifteen. Thenceforth he "haunted her grave by night, brooding on the mystery of the dead," and it is probable that this strange woman and her early death were of importance in giving Poe's fancy its morbid direction. About a year after Helen's death Poe, then sixteen, got himself engaged to Miss Sarah Elmira Royster, bright, pretty, and fifteen, who duly swore to be true "forever and aye." The following year, when Poe returned in disgrace from a wild freshman year at the University of Virginia, Sarah Elmira was out of town, and he found that she was about to marry a Mr. Shelton, which she did. Thenceforth Poe's affections centered in the house of his aunt, Mrs. Clemm, in Baltimore, a loyal, affectionate, masculine woman whom he called mother. In 1835, when he was twenty-six, he married her daughter, Virginia, age thirteen. She was

a graceful and gentle child and Poe doted on her round face and her plump little finger. What with Mrs. Clemm for the companion and executive of the household, it was not a bad arrangement, had not exterior circumstances entered to blast it. For the twelve years of their marriage Poe exhibited a marital tenderness and devotion almost unequalled among the poets. In the eighth year of their marriage poverty descended to stay; Virginia, always frail, broke a blood vessel of the throat while singing, and they knew it was consumption. Poe's dependence on his wife was evident. He grew "sensitive and irritable," took to dope, and would permit no intimation of Virginia's being in danger. From this time until her death he spent only one night away from Virginia. In 1846 they moved out to the Fordham cottage where they lacked food, fuel and clothing. Virginia lay on a straw mattress before the insufficient open fire, wrapped in Poe's old army coat, with their tortoise-shell cat sleeping on her breast for its warmth, Poe holding her hands and Mrs. Clemm her feet. Virginia died on January 30, 1847, and Poe followed her to the cemetery wrapped in the same coat that had inadequately warmed her. He suffered a breakdown and Mrs. Mary Louise Shew nursed him back to health. She told him he should marry again but declined his responsive proposition, although he wrote her with all fervor that he ranked her "beside the friend of my boyhood (Helen) as the tenderest of this world's most womanly souls, and an angel to my forlorn and darkened nature." Poe now went completely hay-wire and seems to have been aiming his shafts in at least three directions at once. At first there was set up a correspondence with his boyhood fiancée, Sarah Elmira Royster, now the wealthy widow Mrs. Shelton. This was altogether a sound proposition, but fate momentarily intervened in the person of Sarah Helen Whitman, poet and prophetess of Providence, Rhode Island, wealthier than Mrs. Shelton, and a widow of forty-five to Poe's thirty-nine. For some years Poe and she had carried on a professionally sentimental correspondence, though they had never met, Poe having been intrigued merely by a verbal description of this sorrow-

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ful genius. Mrs. Whitman seems to have grasped before Poe did the appropriateness of the present moment. He was on the very point of penning a proposition to his childhood sweetheart when he had from Providence a note and some verses. The last threw him into such ecstasies that he was unable to reply. He took up his then well-worn *Helen*, realized that nothing less would do for this lady, and was suddenly overwhelmed by the realization that her name also was Helen. Surely their fates were united. He dropped the letter to Sarah Elmira and rushed to Providence, pausing only to get from a friend a proper letter of introduction to Mrs. Whitman. One day he called on her, two days he called on her, and on the third day he proposed to her in a cemetery. She alternately temporized and refused, having heard sinister things of Poe's habits from her friends. He continued to call, and his passionate appeals became so uncontrollable that they rang through the house. "Never have I heard anything so awful," Mrs. Whitman recorded, "awful even to sublimity." She called a doctor to look Poe over. She became tentatively engaged, upon severe conditions as to his laying off alcohol and laudanum for a long time. Poe calmed his sublimity and went away, only to become at once desperately and hopelessly involved with "Annie," to wit Mrs. Annie Richmond, respectable married lady of Westford, Massachusetts. Poe's rapid and platonic progress with Mrs. Richmond was evidenced by the fact that a few days after his attentions started the pair of them were so shameless as to hold hands on the sofa in the presence of Annie's sister. This attraction seems to have had honesty in it, for it was certainly against interest, and in view of Poe's, and presumably Annie's, conventionality, was hopeless. Poe retired to Boston and broiled over a double fire. He did not forego his marital intentions toward Mrs. Helen Whitman, nor did his passion for Mrs. Annie Richmond abate. He sent them equally hot letters, but with this difference, that those addressed to Helen he usually first sent unsealed to Annie who magnanimously approved, sealed and reposted them. Altogether there seems to have been a pretty irreverent plot against the person and fortune of

the prophetess of Providence. Inevitably now there arose the complication of gossip, smirching the fair name of the married Annie, misinterpreting her platonic adultery. Poe gave up a proposed visit to Westford, and wrote offering to close the correspondence because he would not interfere in the domestic happiness of "the only being in the whole world, whom I have loved at the same time with truth and with purity." There is little reason to doubt the truth of this profession, for Mrs. Richmond was the heroine of *For Annie* and *Annabel Lee*, both written in this tortured period. But Poe's honest love for Annie became at this time a tragic and fatal flaw in his otherwise practical intention to marry and to marry well. Unable to forget Annie, he was too chivalrous to set up with her shamelessly and adulterously, even if this had been practically possible. Determined to marry, he had only abstract, impersonal, sexual starvation to drive him into action; for with the image of Annie fixed validly in his imagination it was difficult to be deluded by sex hunger that otherwise might have deified Mrs. Helen Whitman or any one else on the landscape. Poe was really in a bad way, a poet and emotional absolutist with the absolute in view but conventionally denied him. It is a cynical comment on poets (compare some aspects of the erotic experiences of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats) that in this situation impersonal carnal need and rational considerations, rather than absolute attraction, have so often motivated their main choices. In Poe's case, however, it is likely that the attraction was sufficiently strong to impel the final catastrophe. He lapsed into drunkenness and drugs. He fell ill. He tried to commit suicide with laudanum, but took so enormous an overdose that it acted as an emetic and eliminated itself in time. Poe was out of his head for a time. Surely nothing could be worse than his present situation. Banality and self-dramatization were certainly preferable to madness. He rushed down to Providence, where intelligence had already arrived of his misery and his broken promise *re* drugs and alcohol, lamentable conditions which it was easy for a prophetess named Helen to attribute to her own too cruel charms. She set the stage

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and admitted Poe to her presence. Before his eyes she "drenched her handkerchief with ether," clapped it to her nose and collapsed on the sofa. Poe sank on his knees beside her and begged her to speak one word! "What can I say?" "Say you love me, Helen!" "I love you!" So this by-play ended. Without further communication, Poe left the house and proceeded to New York. In due chivalry he sent Helen a few more letters—unsealed and via Annie as before—until the prophetess exercised her prerogative of finally breaking the engagement. This absurd effort to gild interest with drama now gave way to a sounder and frankly practical design. Still in love with Annie, Poe wrote her that he must get money for many purposes, to make a home for himself and Mrs. Clemm, to get his *Stylus* published, to give himself ease to write. And so his attentions turned back to Mrs. Shelton in Richmond. Thither he proceeded in the early autumn of 1849. The marriage was arranged and the date set. Since the elimination of Helen from the emotional scene, Poe had done little if any drinking. But the falsity of his new position reawakened the conflict in him and seems to have been altogether more than his integrity could bear. He drank himself to death in Baltimore in a few days.

Tennyson was a combination of big, blustering physique and frightened, lady-like inhibitions, "a virgin's spirit in a titan's form." He was shy of the gross, masculine sexual instinct and retreated from it into a professional primness which at once sounded important and justified his timidity. This was his "parlour" attitude, his morbid domesticity, his Victorianism, his quality of "little school-miss Alfred." By all odds the strongest personal devotion of his life was for his classmate, Henry Hallam, who died when Tennyson was twenty-four. In Nicholson's phrase Hallam awakened in Tennyson the "amazed and tremulous feelings" of a woman; and when *In Memoriam* appeared anonymously one critic wrote, "These touching lines evidently come from the full heart of the widow of a military man." Perhaps the most genuine flirtation of Tennyson's life was that with Queen Victoria, because here he had noth-

ing to fear. They carried on an active correspondence, consulting each other with childish naïveté on all sorts of personal matters. Victoria had a place on the Isle of Wight, not very far from Tennyson's Farringford. Being disturbed by the criticism of the bigamy in *Enoch Arden*, she had herself driven to Tennyson's house. She saw him walking in the garden, alighted and went to him unaccompanied. She refused to enter the house but led her Laureate down to the shore where they walked backwards and forwards discussing the moralities involved. She wanted very much to be convinced, but she was not. At last Tennyson told her that poor Enoch had lived on their very island, took her to his tombstone and adjured her to stand by it. This she did, and presently, "God bless him!" she murmured, "He did right after all."

It can perhaps be said of Browning with more conviction than of any other poet that he was a wholly civilized human being, wholly integrated with the moral assumptions of the world into which he was born. At twenty-one he confessed that he had "made up my mind to the impossibility of loving a woman," and had "organized my life accordingly." Meanwhile Elizabeth Barrett, three years his senior, classical scholar and poet of repute, languished in a darkened room in a big house in Wimpole Street, supposedly a hopeless invalid, her life simplified by the serious assurance of her doctors that marriage would kill her. In 1835, when she was twenty-six, one Robert Browning, wholly unknown, published *Paracelsus*. Some one gave Miss Barrett a copy. She admired it and obtained his books thereafter. She resented the unanimous attacks of the critics upon him and continued to watch the growth of this original young man. In 1844 she published her own collected poems. Browning had no reason to suppose that the fabulous recluse of Wimpole Street had ever heard of him. On reading her collected poems in March, 1845, he immediately wrote to her: "I love your verses with all my heart—and I love you too . . . so into me has it all gone, and part of me has it become, this great living poetry of yours." Elizabeth replied at once. With that remarkable restraint that marked the growth of this

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relationship thenceforth, they then corresponded for four months without making any effort to meet. At last, in July, 1845, Miss Barrett's kinsman, Mr. Kenyon, led Browning into the twilit room in Wimpole Street. Miss Barrett's health improved from that day. When he had gone she sent him a note asking him to call again. He replied with a frank declaration of love. Elizabeth sent him a gentle rebuke. In contrition he asked her to return his letter, and he burned it. She wrote, adjuring him to blot his declaration from his mind and never to refer to it again. He solemnly complied, and six months later they were discussing marriage in their almost daily letters. On the morning of September 12, 1846, Elizabeth went out for a drive, met Robert and they were married. She returned to the house where preparations for a general exodus to the Continent were in progress. Under cover of this she packed her own things, and a week later she, her baggage, her maid Wilson, and her famous spaniel Flush, hustling out of the house while papa was away, met Browning and took train for Dover. Thereafter for fifteen years Browning was at once a playful and passionate lover, and a full-time nurse. Never, until the last year of their marriage would he go out in the evening, because she could not. When, after two and a half years, his fragile bride produced a large and healthy boy, he took personal supervision of the baby's care and frequently himself performed the ceremony of the bath and other intimate attentions. Mrs. Browning died in 1861, and Browning immediately left Florence forever. He entertained no sentiment respecting Elizabeth's grave in Florence and never visited it.

Whatever Whitman's homosexual instincts may have been, he indulged them little if any in practice. The boys he tended in the hospitals used to kiss and caress him quite openly, but it is significant that nobody has presented a case where any one of these young men, or any one of the tough nuts he habitually consorted with in New York and who liked him, ever "smacked him on the jaw" or otherwise resented his attentions, a resentment which must surely have arisen if he had been, in Mr. Lewisohn's phrase, a homo-

sexual "of the most advanced and virulent type." He lived on the whole an ascetic life, a condition which led him to exaggerate in imagination his repressed voluptuousness, and to compensate for his general inactivity by large vaunts of orgies which were actually fictitious. That he dreamed of boys as well as girls is apparent enough. But I seriously doubt if, in either case, he went often beyond verbal celebration and mild caresses. He became that thing which has gained for poets their mostly undeserved reputation, a great singer of love and lust but not much of a performer in the business. Until he was twenty-nine he had no sexual experience of any kind. At that age he got a job in New Orleans. While standing at the bar at a ball he suddenly saw a certain woman passionately, apparently his first experience of the kind. He asked a stranger with whom he had been talking if he knew the lady, and finding that he did, asked him to introduce him. As he drew near her he saw nothing but her face, and the rest of the world swam dizzily around him. After introducing him the stranger left them alone. Whitman at once told the lady that he had been looking for her since he was eighteen, and she invited him to come to see her. Just then the kind stranger returned and said, "Wife, ain't it time to go home?" From that time Whitman seems to have been awake sexually. His physical initiation occurred not long after, the lucky lady being an octoroon flower-girl, a member of that brilliant class that was admitted to the quadroon balls but whom no gentleman could marry. Holloway thinks that it was this experience that turned Whitman in the sexual direction and was responsible for all of his later sex poetry. A couple of years later he took another trip south, presumably to see this girl who probably had borne him a child after he left New Orleans. If there was any homosexuality with any of the pathetic little wrecks of the war in Washington, there was at the same time plenty of interest in women. The good gray poet had a platonic love for a lady with a jealous husband, and this produced some fine poetry. Also, as in the case of Keats, there is a cryptic but ominous reference to his having had to do with a woman or women "to the

temporary hurt of his health." In 1871 Whitman was fifty and had had his first stroke. In that year Mrs. Anne Gilchrist, widow of Blake's biographer, having read *Leaves of Grass* but never having seen the author, sent him a passionate avowal of love and a proposal of marriage. Whitman having rejected the offer with great delicacy, Mrs. Gilchrist continued to besiege him until 1874, when she came to America to see him. He succeeded in cooling her passion into friendship, and formed the habit of visiting her every evening in her house, which became a popular literary salon in Philadelphia. After a few years she returned to England, but continued to correspond with Whitman. After his second stroke, being now a permanent invalid, he sent her a ring which she mistakenly took for a betrothal. Whitman succeeded in time in preventing her crossing the Atlantic. Shortly after he bought his house in Camden and set up with Mary Davis, Mrs. Gilchrist died. Mrs. Davis had appeared about 1877 when Whitman was trudging the streets of Philadelphia in fair and foul weather, trying to peddle his little-known volume. The widow Davis had a house and watched him often through the curtains. On a particularly raw winter day he came to her door and asked for shelter. She fed him and warmed him, and asked him to let her mend his clothes. He began to call there regularly, and while Mary sewed his rents she became also audience to his talk. She undoubtedly fell in love with him and Whitman undoubtedly treated her very badly. Not long after he began to visit her he invested his whole capital, \$1750, in the little house in Camden which survives, and lived there for a short time without furniture, in solitary squalor. Presently he induced Mary Davis to move in with him, bringing her furniture; and thenceforth she cared for him like a wife. As his fame and the returns from his books and lectures increased he worked the poor woman harder and harder in entertaining the celebrities and lion-hunters who began to pilgrimage to Camden. But he did not increase her housekeeping allowance, and she gradually spent her own substance to support him. Once he gave her a ring, as he had done to Mrs. Gilchrist, but as in the

former case he had no notion of a betrothal. When he died leaving a small fortune, he left Mary Davis only \$500. She sued his estate for \$5000, but got only \$500 more than her original legacy. She is a blot on Whitman's magnanimity.

Morris was tongue-tied in the presence of women. While painting Jane Borden he paused to write on the back of the canvas, "I cannot paint you but I love you," and showed it to her. And so they were married.

When Rossetti was twenty-two young Walter Deverell of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood rushed into Millais' studio, where they habitually gathered at the time, and announced that he had found the most beautiful woman and model in the world. It seemed that Deverell and his mother had entered a certain bonnet shop where this paragon was employed as a seamstress. She was seventeen, tall, dignified, had a brilliant complexion, pale blue eyes and a great mass of coppery-gold hair. Her name was Elizabeth Siddell, and she was the daughter of a tradesman. She became at once the model for the whole brotherhood, and a year later Rossetti's fiancée. The girl had real nobility and devotion, also some poetic talent, but she had no education and could not be a companion to Rossetti. She concealed her serious, loving nature under a dry humorous manner of address. For nine years they were engaged, "Lizzie" living with Rossetti in his house in Chatham Place, gradually declining under the icy jealousy of his sister Christina, his frequent infidelities and increasing indifference, and her own tendency to tuberculosis. In 1860, when he was thirty-two and she was twenty-seven he married her in Bath and they honeymooned in Paris. She was already far gone. Two years later she died, the immediate cause being an overdose of laudanum. Rossetti was stricken in conscience. He had a dossier containing many of his later celebrated poems, without a copy of any of them. He decided to bury these poems with his wife in expiation for having worked at them when he might have been attending to her. He never looked at Lizzie in her coffin, but kept his face averted while he placed the dossier between her cold cheek and her hair. He

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spent the first few nights after her death with his mistress, Fanny Hughes. Seven years later Rossetti wanted to publish a volume of verse but was unable to remember several of the best poems he had buried with Lizzie. His friends urged him to have the dossier exhumed from Lizzie's grave and he finally consented. The strange violation was performed by lantern light, and a long strand of Lizzie's hair came away with the book.

Swinburne, with his spindly, dangling body and great chinless head, was no great success with the ladies. As a youth he fell in love with a very beautiful girl who was his father's ward, and was so impractical as to take it all mystically. He believed that the gods had sent her to him and that he must be careful not to meddle with fate by trying to hasten her awakening. So the years passed in daily companionship until one day the young lady confided to him that she was secretly engaged to one of their mutual friends, and solicited his help in trying to persuade his father to permit her to marry at an age considered too young. Still Swinburne did not speak for himself but, having questioned her closely and satisfied himself that her heart was committed to his friend, he interceded with his father and obtained his consent to the marriage. While an undergraduate, he fell wildly impassioned of a vivacious little girl, Jane Faulkner. One day to her amazement he fell on the floor before her and in his shrill voice declared himself with preposterous violence. The girl, recovering from fright, but still nervous, laughed hysterically. Swinburne thereupon renounced honorable love and kept his vow. During his later debauched period he used to frequent shows of sadism, but it is doubtful whether even normal lust came within his personal practice. Rossetti, hoping to normalize him, made a bet with Adah Isaacs Menken, the darling of theatrical and otherwise gay London, that she could not spend a successful night with Swinburne. Miss Menken was agreeable to the plot, she being an ambitious poetess and eager for his criticism of a volume she was about to dedicate to her friend Dickens. One version of the story has it that Miss Menken eventually paid Rossetti the wager. Another in-

cludes an incident of Miss Menken's starting to talk poetry to Swinburne as they awoke one morning in his apartment—"Darling," said Swinburne, "a woman who has such beautiful legs should not discuss poetry."

Perhaps a trifle less savage in possessiveness than Mr. Barrett, Edward Dickinson was more successful in preempting the affections and loyalties of his talented daughter. At some time in the 1840's "Squire" Dickinson appeared suddenly in his garden one night, holding up a lantern and surprising Emily in the company of a certain young man. Emily told her father that since he did not trust her she would never entertain a man in the garden again, and she never did. This may have been George Gould, six feet eight tall, emotional, mystical, poetical, destined to be a minister. During his senior year, 1850, Gould was editor-in-chief of *The Indicator*, the college paper. On Valentine's Day of that winter Emily sent an involved flirtatious valentine to *The Indicator* which published it. At about this time Squire Dickinson, perceiving that Emily was interested in George Gould, forbade her to see him further. At commencement, Emily sent him word to meet her at a certain place in the college grounds where she told him of her father's decree, promised to love him always, and, being dressed in white at the time, promised him to wear only white thence-forward, summer and winter. Both of these promises she kept. She further promised to answer all of his letters and told him of an arrangement she had already completed for the secret delivery of his communications. Deacon Luke Sweetser was almost as important a man in Amherst as Squire Edward Dickinson, the two being famous rivals for the possession of the fastest horses in town. After 1850 the deacon formed a suspicious habit of climbing over the Dickinsons' garden wall at odd times when the Irish "girl" Maggie was doing some chore in the garden. He would approach Maggie and make a deep bow with a sweep of his hat holding it near enough to Maggie to let her snatch out the letter it contained. Then the dignified deacon would retire over the wall, and Maggie would run upstairs to Emily's room, slip the letter under the door, and give a

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prearranged triple tap. When Emily renounced Gould in 1850 she was making no final choice, for he was then a penniless boy with his way to make. But four years later the clean issue arose and Emily chose her father. That was in 1854 when the squire took his family with him to Washington. On their way back Emily, with her mother, her brother Austin and her sister Lavinia, stopped for a two weeks' visit in Philadelphia. George Gould, having meanwhile graduated from Union Theological Seminary in New York, was occupying a pulpit there. For two weeks he besieged Emily, now frankly asking her to marry him, but whatever his charm had been in Amherst, he was now unable to replace her father in her feelings. Gould waited for her until 1860, then, being a successful preacher in Worcester, married. When the powerful Squire died it was too late.

Francis Thompson had two important loves, neither of which put him under the embarrassing necessity of action. While starving on the London streets he made the acquaintance of a motherly little whore. Earning a few shillings at her trade she would meet him regularly, take him to her room in a cab, feed and house him. It was an innocent, wholly chaste, childlike idyll, Thompson treating this angelic creature with such honesty, humility and reverence as she had never known. When he told her that Wilfrid Meynell, editor of *Merry England*, had accepted something of his and wanted to see him, she said, "They will not understand our friendship. I always knew you were a genius." The next day she had disappeared to unknown lodgings and Thompson looked for her in vain. For years thereafter, when he had been reclaimed and was established as a poet, he still walked the streets of their old haunts almost nightly. But he never found her. His other love, the orienting love of his creative years, was for Alice Meynell, co-benefactor to him with her husband. Here was the ideal relationship for Thompson, devotion to a brilliant woman, with no hope of the consummation that would have frightened him as an invasion of his mystical privacy. He wrote a little vaingloriously of his renunciation which was the one thing that made

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his life tolerable: "I yielded to the insistent commands of my conscience and uprooted my heart. . . . I thought I owed it to her whom I loved more than my love of her finally to uproot that love." This chaste passion stimulated Thompson to the composition of *Sister Songs*, and probably *The Hound of Heaven* also. Here, as in the case of Dante and Beatrice, was a poet's love at its functional best; the simple and childlike intercommunication, the physical frustration and the consequent imaginative surge.

Every morning Wilde used to buy a single flower, walk across London holding it in front of him, and wait outside the theatre till Mrs. Langtry arrived, when he would open her carriage door and present it to her without comment. For a time she was pleased by this daily tribute, then grew bored with Wilde's silent adoration and had him ordered away. Deeply hurt he now stood "limp and dismal" in the shadow of the theatre wall each night when she emerged, until at last she pitied him and sent him word that he might continue his daily present. Wilde was the only one of the English poets who was a homosexual of the extreme or feminine sort. He was married in 1884 and is supposed to have begun his perverse practices two years later. In 1891 he was convicted on six counts. Just before the trial, being in Algeria, he arranged for two boys to be brought to his room for the use of himself and André Gide.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Page 413, Donne. The dead child, see *Miscellaneous Aberrations*, p. 466.  
Pages 438-45, Shelley. For Shelley's attempt to solve the "great mystery" with Jane Williams, see *Hobbies and Avocations*, p. 207.  
Raleigh (not mentioned in this section). See *Courts, Crimes and Prisons*, p. 369.

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Since the prehistoric era when the race began to get a little socialized, or civilized, there has been trouble about surplus energy. After such cavern wars as we can now hardly imagine, the individualistic ape submitted in some

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part to the common rule, but bequeathed to every man a sort of vestigial discontent which civilization has not yet been able entirely to allay. In most men this fretfulness demands, besides miscellaneous little whirls of adultery or "whoopee," some more or less continuous resistance, some unnatural load to bear, some useless task on which perpetually to waste itself away. By and large, this needful perversion, this artificial nibbler of health and energy, has been supplied by drugs. Man becomes unique in nature as the animal who habitually and voluntarily poisons himself. Throughout history, and indefinitely before, this salutary custom has prevailed, smoking this, swallowing that, sipping the other. Show me a man who is not addicted to some form of deliberate autointoxication and I will show you a man who is either subnormal nervously, or who chews his pencil or his fingernails, or who is guilty of other horrid furtive vice. In the section called "Little Indulgences" I indicated some of the commoner and milder practices, like smoking and moderate drinking. In the present section I shall notice some of the extremities of indulgence. Poets are chronically excessive in everything. They demand perfection in love, in art, in philosophy, and if they take to alcohol or opium for pleasure or escape, they must make that pleasure or that escape absolute within the limits of the resistance of their poor, abused bodies.

Greene died at thirty-two of "a surfeit of pickled herrings and Rhenish wine."

Nash alternated "between riotous excess and abject misery."

Once while Jonson was in Henslowe's company in London, he got drunk and fell off the dock into the river, whence he was hauled with rope. When he was being tried in the Consistory Court for Catholicism and, having professed the Church of England, was given a goblet of sacramental wine to sip, he guzzled the whole goblet. After Ben's death many taverns were named for him; at the end of the seventeenth century there were five in London called "Ye Jonson Head."

The following were abandoned drunkards: Rochester,

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who for five years was "at no time master of himself"; Edmund Smith; Collins, who became a drunkard upon the failure of his first book; Somerville, who drank himself to death; Churchill, whose work became incoherent; and Freneau as an old man.

Young Chatterton in London alternated between fits of violent drunkenness and violent remorse.

When Crabbe was thirty-six he started taking opiates for his vertigo and was thenceforth addicted to opium.

Burns spent his nineteenth summer at school in a smuggling town where he participated, for the first time, in "scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation. . . . I learned to fill my glass and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble. . . ."

At or before Cambridge Coleridge became a heavy drinker of brandy; but it was his addiction to laudanum that was serious. He was, so far as appears, the first great poet to take on this habit. I do not know when he started taking laudanum, but when he was twenty-one he confessed to Mary Evans that he had taken "quite a dose of opium." Three years later, when he was penniless, and his wife was expecting a child, he began to soothe his incompetence by periodic ministrations from the phial. Hysterically concerned with his responsibility after the birth of little Hartley, he got "an intolerable pain from the right temple to the tip of the right shoulder," and this of course required a good deal of medicine. From this time, 1794, he sank slowly through sixteen years into degradation, fighting meanwhile like some vague, deeply hooked codfish. Coleridge was singularly well adapted to opium, a man with small character, no orderliness or consistency of mind, and a fancy like a pulsing geyser of some powerful liquor capable of filling him either with joy or the torture of morbid phantoms. Circumstances conspired to exaggerate his weaknesses. He suffered poverty, some physical pain, critical neglect and domestic wretchedness. The wonder is that he succumbed as slowly as he did. By 1810 he was apparently lost, taking no less than two quarts of laudanum a week and no more than a pint a day. While in Bristol he visited

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Hannah More who observed that his hand shook so that he could not take a glass of wine without spilling it, though one hand supported the other. Three years later, in 1816, he put himself in the hands of one Doctor Adams who allocated him in London to the house of Mr. Gillman, a kindly surgeon "with interests other than medical." Here the opium was gradually reduced under Gillman's careful attention, and here, cared for like the baby he had always been, Coleridge passed the last and the happiest and the only orderly eighteen years of his life.

It is to the credit of Byron's character that at no time did he approach addiction to laudanum, although he took a good deal of it during the ghastly year of his marriage.

Shelley was a man of strong ideational control, incapable of unidealized self-indulgence. Consequently he took laudanum for his companion, but it never took him for its slave. In 1814, at the height of his marital troubles, he tried to commit suicide with an overdose and almost succeeded. Periodically Shelley led an outdoor life, and his health immediately improved. But he couldn't work under these conditions, and as soon as he began to write must needs subsist on tea, lemonade and no exercise. Then he got sick. Then he took laudanum to keep going. Then he quit work and laudanum and was healthy again. And so back to work. And so it went.

Keats had no indulgences of any kind. In late 1819, being physically and spiritually wretched, he formed the habit of taking occasionally "a few drops of laudanum."

Poe was born to the bottle. His father was a consistent drunkard, and his mother was so sporadically. By the time he was seventeen he amused himself and his friends by drinking peach brandy by the tumblerful, bottoms-up, and showed very slight effects from it. At twenty-two he was already an intermittent drunkard. When he married, three years later, he had discovered opium as an additional anodyne. In 1836 he was fired for drunkenness from the good job of editor of *The Southern Literary Messenger*, being at this time a "spree" drinker, not an habitual alcoholic. Having tried for two years to get a government position, he was

summoned to Washington in 1843 for an interview that looked directly to his employment. But the first night in the capital, his host's port and the rum in his coffee started Poe on a spree of several days. He never showed up for his interview, and went back to Philadelphia in disgrace. The next year he went to New York and became a hack writer, and for the first time a chronic souse. When Lowell came to see him he found Poe unable to carry on a conversation. His health was now beginning to give way under alcohol and laudanum, and the weaker he grew the more he drank of both, especially the latter. In January, 1847, his wife died, he collapsed, and after an illness arose apparently cured, keeping regular hours, eating moderately, taking plenty of exercise in the open air, and drinking only water. But a year later began that unfortunate tour of sexual extravagance which I noticed in the last section. While torn between marital intentions toward Mrs. Whitman in Providence and the love of Mrs. Richmond in Westford, Poe, on the neutral ground of Boston, projected the extreme escape. He bought twice as much laudanum as was needful to kill him. He wrote to Mrs. Richmond, reminding her of a former promise to come to his death-bed, and telling her that now was the time to keep her promise. He then drank half of his double portion of laudanum, and went out to post the letter to Mrs. Richmond, intending to drink the other half when she arrived. But unforeseeably his system rejected the mortal dose. He threw it up in the street, the letter was never posted, he was helped home like any drunk, and after three days was able to continue the interrupted courtship of Mrs. Whitman. Poe had now reached the point where he had no capacity for alcohol at all, a single drink being sufficient to inebriate and sicken him. In 1849 he was medically warned that one more spree would kill him. He resisted temptation. He went to Richmond and got himself hypocritically engaged to a rich widow. Everything looked lovely now. But Poe's spiritual integrity was stronger than his character. Leaving Richmond for New York, he paused in Baltimore and quickly drank himself to death.

When Elizabeth Barrett was twenty-four, she was tak-

ing forty drops of laudanum a day, by medical prescription. She took none after she was married.

Rossetti began taking laudanum for insomnia when he was forty-two, and the jig was up. He at once expanded into the field of chloral, which became his principal habit, and he used to take pride in the dangerous amounts he could consume. By 1871 he was already suffering from delusions of persecution, and to escape them on one occasion swallowed an unusually large phial of laudanum which almost killed him and left him with paralysis of one leg. In 1881, when he was fifty-three, he had a paralytic stroke and his chloral was stopped. Immediately his delusions vanished and his mind was calmed. But he had not vitality left to work, or even to walk, and so rapidly declined and died.

Swinburne, once he was alone in London, became a drunkard. In his early twenties, at the Pre-Raphaelite parties, being ten years younger than most of them, he was usually ten times drunker. Elizabeth Siddell, Rossetti's wife, used to pin his address under the collar of his great coat, in order that the cab-driver, or other kindly soul, might know how to return him to his rooms after he had left the party. At the meetings of the Cannibal Club he always passed out. At length he reached that chronic state where a single drink was enough to make him drunk. He was continuously being found in miscellaneous gutters, often sleeping peacefully in them. Watts-Dunton once found him in this state, carried him by force to his own rooms, and thence by further force to a villa in Putney, at No 2 "The Pines." Here he imprisoned him, took away his liquor, limited the friends who might see him, and bade him write. And Swinburne of course, living thus peacefully for thirty years, never again wrote anything worth preserving. When Beerbohm lunched with him and Watts-Dunton at Putney, there was at Swinburne's place a small bottle of Bass's pale ale. "This small bottle," records Beerbohm, "he eyed often and with enthusiasm"—this "ultimate allowance of one who had erst clashed cymbals in Naxos."

In 1879, when Francis Thompson was twenty, he had a bad fever, and probably was given a little opium for it. At

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about the same time, for some unknown reason, his mother gave him De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater*. Thenceforth he looked on De Quincey as a kindred spirit and an elder brother. During his six years of medical study he habitually sold his books and medical instruments to buy opium. When he was twenty-seven and had spent almost two years on the London streets, Wilfrid Meynell discovered him, and persuaded him to submit to a medical examination. The report was that he could not live under any circumstances and that to cut off his opium would only hasten his death. Meynell sent him first to a private hospital, and afterwards put him for two years with the monks at Stonington Priory. Here he gradually gave up the habit, his health returned, and in the last six months before his emergence he wrote *Shelley* and *The Hound of Heaven*. At twenty-nine he was pronounced cured and was not again mastered by opium. But from time to time he did take a little as medicine, which seems to have staved off consumption for a while and thus to have been responsible for his later poetry.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

*In general.* Compare "Little Indulgences," p. 190.  
Page 461, Freneau. For his final spree, see *Death*, p. 269.  
Pages 464-5, Thompson. For his father's noticing his opiate flush, see *Early Domestic Attachments*, p. 37.  
Pages 462-3, Poe. For his final spree, see *Death*, p. 282.  
Cowley (not mentioned in this section). For his final spree, see *Death*, p. 266.  
Savage (not mentioned in this section). For his dissipations, see *The Struggle for Integrity*, pp. 342-3.

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Surely we are all queer, but if differences in degree be admitted the poets are queerer than most. In this section I will give miscellaneous instances of the queerness of the poets not found under other, more specific headings.

In the melancholy of poverty Donne became preoccupied with suicide and wrote a book about it, *Biathanatos*, arguing on theological grounds that it was sometimes excusable. In 1611, he was invited by his then patron, Sir Robert Drury, to accompany him on a journey to France. Donne's "poor wife" was with child and nearing her time, but Sir Robert insisted and Donne, very much against his will but in fear of losing his job, did finally accompany him. Incidentally it was at this parting that he wrote, "Sweetest love, I do not go for weariness of thee. . . ." One day in Paris Sir Robert came on Donne in his room very much agitated. He had seen a vision of Mrs. Donne passing twice through the room with a dead child in her arms. Later it appeared that she had been delivered of a dead child at precisely that hour. During Donne's frequent illnesses he was acutely aware of the increase of spiritual strength commensurate with the decline of physical power. "My taste is not gone away, but gone up to David's table; my stomach is not gone but gone upwards toward the Supper of the Lamb." He spoke of himself as "mine own ghost, and rather affright my beholders than instruct them." Thus in 1623 he sat propped up in his bed in his vast, dark chamber, practicing "my lying in the grave," writing funereal conceits, while "that striking clock which I ordinarily wear" ticked on the table beside him.

At the time when the Scotch Treaty was up for consideration, Cowley cast the Virgilian lots, found that Virgil approved, and seriously set forth his findings as an argument for the treaty.

One day when Roscommon was ten years old and with his tutor in Caen, he grew suddenly agitated in his play, tipping over toys and tables, and in the midst of this fit cried out, "My father is dead." Two weeks later they learned that he had died about that time.

Dryden took astrology very seriously and practiced it, boasting of his predictions that came true.

Matthew Green was subject to attacks of low spirits or "spleen." Having tried "all imaginable remedies," he decided upon the psychological experiment of writing it out, and did. Hence, *The Spleen*.

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At twenty-five Gray returned to Cambridge, took his B.A., took up residence in Peterhouse, and became "a middle-aged man," sedentary, a little bilious, extremely hypochondriac. His abnormally faint vitality showed itself in perpetual fear of death and fire, finickiness in his habits and peevish intolerance in his association. He took to learning as a narcotic to waft him away from the intolerable world. Near the end of his life he became elegant in his dress to the point of effeminacy. One day he was on the Windsor stage. A fellow-passenger, passing Kensington churchyard, recited some stanzas from the then famous *Elegy*, and remarked to Gray how strange it was that the author of those lines should be delicate, timid, effeminate, "a puny insect shivering at a breeze." Gray agreed that it was strange. When they descended, the reciter of the verses was met by a fellow townsman who quickly whispered to him, "That is Mr. Gray the poet."

When Blake was four, God put his forehead down to the window and set him screaming. Shortly thereafter his mother beat him for saying he saw Ezekiel under a tree. At eight he saw "a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough with stars." On this occasion his mother took his part and prevented his father from beating him. One day in his boyhood while he was sketching in Westminster Abbey, he saw Christ and the Apostles. When he was thirty-one his deceased brother Robert appeared to him and told him the process for engraving the *Songs of Innocence*. Six years later he engraved the *Ancient of Days* from a vision that hovered at the top of the staircase above him. He once announced that he had been "commanded from Hell" not to publish some notes he had made. In 1803, when he was forty-six, he saw the visions recorded in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. In 1819 and 1820 Blake mystified the painter and astrologer John Varley by drawing various heads and the "ghost of a flea" from supposed spiritual models visible only to himself, complaining, all the time he worked, that they kept moving and interfering with each other. Once when he was sitting in company beside a lady of whom he knew little and the conversation

lagged, Blake suddenly inquired in all solemnity, "Did you ever see a fairy's funeral, madam? . . . I have, but not before last night. I was walking alone in my garden, there was great stillness among the branches and flowers and more than common sweetness in the air; I heard a low and pleasant sound, and I knew not whence it came. At last I saw the broad leaf of a flower move, and underneath I saw a procession of creatures of the size and color of green and gray grasshoppers, bearing a body laid out on a rose leaf, which they buried with songs, and then disappeared. It was a fairy funeral." On his death-bed Blake burst out singing "in a most glorious manner" of things he already saw in heaven. Besides seeing visions, Blake performed two or three feats of telepathy. Once when he was at Hampstead with a group of friends Samuel Palmer, one of them, left for London. Not long after his departure Blake put his hand to his head and said quietly, "Palmer is coming, he is walking up the road." He was assured that Palmer had departed for London, but in a few minutes he said again, "He is coming through the wicket gate—there!"—pointing to the closed door. And when he had finished speaking Palmer lifted the latch and entered. When Blake was fourteen he refused to be apprenticed to one Ryland, an engraver, saying, "Father, I do not like the man's face: it looks as if he will live to be hanged." Twelve years later Ryland was the last man to be hanged in Tyburn prison. Blake declared that only once had he seen a ghost, for these apparitions, he said, appeared mostly to worldly imaginations. It was when he was living at Lambeth, where, one evening attending at his garden door, he chanced to look up and saw a horrible figure, "scaly, speckled, very awful," stalking downstairs towards him. In a panic he fled from the house.

In imagination Coleridge had the capacity for Blake's mysticism, but he always retained a peevish and absurd hankering after the world, and wasted much fancy in deluding himself with the fiction that he was of it. As a child he spent all of his time in reading or in acting over in imagination the wonders he had read. Or he lay trembling, haunted by specters. At six he had already lost the ability

to distinguish between the miraculous and the normal, that is, between the fantastic or subjective and the objective actual. "Even the contrasts between night and day, sleeping and waking, ceased to be clearly defined." The list of his aberrations on the lecture platform is long. For his first series of lectures in Bath, he failed to appear. Subsequently, however, he made an impression there as a religious-minded speaker and was asked to preach in a Unitarian Chapel on "Revealed Religion: Its Corruption and Political Views." He shocked the congregation by appearing "with his blue coat and waistcoat undraped," and then proceeded to inflict on them "a previously delivered lecture on the Corn Laws." His reception was chilly and "it was even chillier when, stimulated by his dinner, he compelled them to listen in the afternoon to his old lecture in reprobation of the Hair Powder Tax." In 1813, being then forty-one, he undertook to deliver a course of lectures in Bristol and twice failed to appear upon an original and postponed date set for the first lecture. At one of the later lectures he encountered his publisher Cottle just before mounting the platform, and clasped his hand solemnly, assuring him that "this day week I shall not be alive." When young De Quincey went to see him he came on him in a gateway, gazing about, but "it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any object on the street." Thus abnormally insensitive to external stimuli, he became hyper-hypochondriacally sensitive to internal ones. "I hear in my brain, and still more in my stomach." In 1803 he wrote to Southey from Scotland: ". . . My spirits are dreadful, owing entirely to the horrors every night. . . . It is no shadow with me, but substantial misery foot-thick, that makes me sit by my bedside of a morning and cry. . . . God! when a man blesses the loud screams of agony that awake him night after night, night after night, and when a man's repeated night screams have made him a nuisance in his own house, it is better to die than to live." Opium of course was exaggerating this condition, but the basis of it was essence of Coleridge.

In a letter from Venice, shortly after the separation from his wife, Byron gives the following instance of moderate

nervousness: "I am so bilious that I nearly lose my head, and so nervous that I cry for nothing. At last, today, I burst into tears, all alone by myself, over a cistern of gold-fishes, which are not pathetic animals." More typically Byronic were some of the incidents on his fatal expedition to Greece in the cause of liberty. I quote "Mr. S——," as quoted in Mayne's biography: At Euphemia "they slept at a monastery on the hill of Samos across the bay. Almost directly they reached it Byron retired; in a few minutes the rest were alarmed by the entrance of Bruno" (the rather puny and ineffectual doctor of the expedition). . . . "He announced that Byron had been seized with violent spasms, and that his brain was excited to 'dangerous excess,' so that he would not tolerate the presence of any one in his room. He refused all medicine, and stamped and tore all his clothes and bedding like a maniac. We could hear him rattling and ejaculating. Poor Bruno . . . implored one or more of the company to go to his lordship and induce him, if possible, to save his *life* by taking the necessary medicine. Trelawney at once proceeded to the room, but soon returned saying that it would take ten such as he to hold his lordship for a minute, adding that Lord Byron would not leave an unbroken article in the room. The doctor again essayed an entrance, but without success. The monks were becoming alarmed, and so, in truth, were all present. The doctor asked me to try to bring his lordship to reason; 'he will thank you when he is well,' he said, 'but get him to take this one pill and he will be safe.' It seemed a very easy undertaking, and I went. There being no lock on the door, entry was obtainable in spite of a barricade of chairs and a table within. His lordship was half undressed, standing in a far corner like a hunted animal at bay. As I looked determined to advance in spite of his imprecations of 'Back! Out, out of my sight, fiends! Can I have no peace, no relief from this hell! Leave me, I say!' he lifted the chair nearest him and hurled it direct at my head; I escaped as best I could, and returned to the *sala*. . . . Mr. Hamilton Browne, one of our party, now volunteered an attempt, and the silence that greeted his entrance augured well for his suc-

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cess. He returned much sooner than expected, telling the doctor he might go to sleep. Lord Byron had taken both pills. . . ." A milder episode occurred at the official reception at this same monastery. "The Abbot had been told of their coming, and prepared a great reception for the English nobleman. Monks were ranged along the terrace, 'chanting hymns of glorification and welcome'; the Abbot, clad in sacerdotal robes, received him at the porch. A vast hall was illuminated; 'boys swung censers . . . under the poet's nose'; and then the Abbot proceeded to intone 'a turgid and interminable eulogism' on the 'Lordo Inglese,' in a polyglot of tongues. . . . Byron had not spoken a word since we entered. . . . Suddenly he burst into a paroxysm of rage . . . , a torrent of Italian execrations . . . , then, turning to us with flashing eyes, he vehemently exclaimed, 'Will no one release me from the presence of these pestilential idiots? They drive me mad!' Seizing a lamp, he left the room. The Abbot was struck to stone for a few moments; then in a low tremulous voice said, ' . . . Eccolo, é matto, poveretto.' (Poor fellow, he is mad.)" An evidence of Byron's essential instability was his lifelong superstition. With him a good deed done was a good omen for that whole day. Once he found a brad on a wire in a lady's work box and, being told it was a charm against love, stole it and refused to give it back. In Venice he was once ready and dressed for a trip to England, his gloves and cap on, his little cane in his hand, his baggage already on the gondola, everything ready except his own box of firearms. Suddenly he declared that if it should strike one before he had departed he would not go that day. It did strike one and he did not depart for England, either on that day or ever. Until the final fatal gesture of his life he would never start anything on a Friday. Yet he sailed from Genoa for Greece on Friday the thirteenth. Being shortly driven back by a storm, he said that he "considered a bad beginning a favourable omen."

As soon as Shelley could talk he began telling his sisters tales of strange monsters, and about the same time he ran through the house with a flaming portable stove. As a tiny

boy he used to go on walks alone, and told a story of how each day he encountered in the woods a tall lady dressed all in white. Once crossing Magdalen Bridge in Oxford, in company with his friend Hogg, he snatched a tiny baby from a woman's arms, demanding excitedly, "Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?"—he was dreadfully downcast when he was told that the baby could not speak. Not long after this he followed a promising-looking beggar for over a mile, asking him thousands of questions about ultimate truth—but he did not obtain a satisfactory answer. During his period of greatest poverty in London, when he was mostly hiding from bailiffs and visiting Mary in their flat only at "the witching hour of night," he always took advantage of the time and the situation to impersonate apparitions with terrible looks, to the especial terror of Mary's companion, Claire Clairmont. One rainy night when he and Mary were visiting Byron on Lake Geneva, Byron diverted the company by reciting the undressing of the witch in *Christabel*. Suddenly Shelley shrieked, put his hands to his head, seized a candle and fled from the room. The rest chased him, caught him, threw water in his face and "gave him ether." The following day Shelley explained that as he was looking at Mary he remembered a woman he had heard of who had eyes instead of nipples. All of his life Shelley believed in ghosts, and besides this penchant for fancies and apparitions, was especially notable for pathologically sensitive perception. In 1817 he wrote to Godwin: "My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to a state of such excitement that, only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinction." He often fell into deep sleep in the evening, even when guests were present. On the last night in London before leaving for Italy he committed this inadvertence, and so failed to say good-bye to the Hunts who had been visiting the Shelleys.

From the time of the death of his brother Tom, in the autumn of 1818, Keats grew morbid. Not long thereafter a white rabbit entered the garden of Brown's house where

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Keats was living, and their friend Dilke shot it. Keats was much upset by the occurrence, saying that the rabbit was Tom's spirit, and he would not be comforted. Consequently, when it was served up at the table no one would touch it. By the following summer, about six months before his first hemorrhage, he was hypochondriac, haunted by death, and sunk in the profoundest melancholy over his failure and his consequent inability to marry.

Poe was subject to sinister forebodings and dark imaginings, even before these tendencies were encouraged by alcohol and drugs. All his life he was afraid to go out in the dark, saying with false jocosity that he believed evil demons had power then. After his wife's death he wrote: "Each time I felt all the agonies of her death. . . . But I am constitutionally sensitive. . . . I became insane with long intervals of horrible sanity."

Timidity seems to have been Tennyson's dominant moral trait. Once at Cambridge he was scheduled to read a paper on Ghosts before the literary club, the Apostles, who were his intimates. But shortly before his appearance he went hysterical with embarrassment, tore up the paper he had prepared, and ceased to be a member of the club. While still at Cambridge he wrote the prize poem *Timbuctoo*, but was too frightened to deliver it, in accordance with custom, and it had to be read for him. All his life he was afraid of death and the life after death to the point of neurosis, and by his middle thirties was a confirmed hypochondriac. He hated to be examined and lived in terror of the newspapers. Not long before he died he cried out, "Oh, that press will get me now!" Over against his social and physical timidity, Tennyson had bold, intellectual curiosity, especially in his early years. A week after his father's death when Alfred was twenty-two, he slept in his bed "earnestly desiring to see a ghost." More or less inadvertently he seems to have shown himself to be psychic, or telepathic. Once, being in a village social gathering which included Doctor Marsden the mesmerist, he mesmerized a young lady under the doctor's instructions. On a subsequent occasion Tennyson related that the young lady "had a pain over her temple, and

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the doctor said, 'Breathe upon her eye!' I did so, then begged her pardon, saying that I had forgotten that I had been smoking. Doctor Marsden said, 'She cannot hear you, that one breath has sent her off into the deepest slumbers.' Subsequently Tennyson visited the same village and the lady felt his presence long before he came to her house. Not long after that Doctor Marsden married her.

Browning had no eccentricities. Lockhart, that sensitive critic who did his best to stifle Shelley and Keats, said, "I like Browning, he isn't at all like a damned literary man."

Emily Brontë was so shy that she could talk to people only with her back to them.

After Rossetti's wife's death, when he was thirty-four, he suffered from remorse for having neglected her in her illness. He found a chaffinch which he associated with her spirit. In 1871, when he was forty-three, he got a persecution complex. The poet Buchanan wrote a vicious attack on him and the Pre-Raphaelites in an article called *The Fleshly School*, and not long after this he was candidly settled in the conviction that there was a widespread conspiracy to hound him out of society. He believed that Browning and Carroll had respectively aimed *Fifine the Fair* and part of *The Hunting of the Snark* at his accursed head. He peremptorily quitted a visit to Morris at Kelmscott because of a quarrel with some fishermen who, he thought, had purposely insulted him. He thought that a perennial thrush in his garden had been trained to express obloquies of him. With the assistance of chloral he could hear voices in the air imprecating him. These delusions were not constant, and he was never pronounced technically insane.

Swinburne was very nervous and would start as if he were hit when spoken to suddenly. Several times when he saw his own face in the mirror unexpectedly he smashed the mirror thinking that some one was laughing at him. One night a lady he was visiting in the country filled his room with Japanese lilies. In the middle of the night Swinburne woke in a delirium, rousing the house with his shrieks, declaring that he had been poisoned by the perfume.

Francis Thompson was always a child and always pre-

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ferred the society of children. At the time of his death he still had a wonderfully built cardboard theatre and mariolettes for it. From the time he went away to school he retreated from life and inaugurated "a career of evasion and silence." When he was on the bum he grew more and more ashamed to go to the reading-room to collect the seven shillings a week his father sent him there, ashamed on account of his rags, afraid the allowance would be stopped —and so it finally was, though only because he failed to appear to collect it. After he had been about a year on the streets, he gathered enough pence to buy writing materials and stamps, and posted an article and a few poems to *Merry England*, a Manchester magazine. He enclosed a stamped envelope for rejection, but with a note asking that the manuscript be not returned as he would not try it elsewhere. Wilfrid Meynell, the editor, and Mrs. (Alice) Meynell decided to use part of the article and a poem, and Mr. Meynell wrote Thompson an acceptance at the Charing Cross Post Office, which he had given as address. The letter was returned undelivered. Almost a year later he printed the poem *Passion of Mary* in order to force a response from the author. Thompson did respond with a complaint and a new address, a chemist's shop. Meynell wrote asking for a meeting to arrange for regular work. No reply. Meynell sent a special messenger, but the chemist professed ignorance of Thompson. Finally Meynell went himself and after bribing the chemist to produce the poet, obtained an interview and got out of Thompson a promise to appear at his office on a certain day. At the time set there was a barely audible knock on the door. It opened very slowly. A hand came through and then withdrew. This happened three times while Meynell watched, not daring to move or speak. Finally Thompson entered, watchful, furtive, very hunted. There was no one else in the office but Meynell, and he had seen him before. He had now been on the bum for two years, and he was more ragged than most men in his station —no shirt under his coat, and his bare feet showing through his broken shoes. Yet he was very proud and secretive and refused to accept a regular allowance. He did promise to

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call again, and after many such futile calls Meynell won his confidence, captured him, and carried him off to his house. But even after his redemption Thompson was forever withdrawing into the state described by Hind in recording a pause to eat with him in a railroad station: "Suddenly he became rigid, his body swayed, and a film came over his eyes. A minute or two passed; then he recovered, lighted his pipe, and did not refer to the episode." Superficially the leading characteristic of Thompson was his absent-mindedness, his tardiness, always with apologies, his sheer inability to remember or, even if reminded, to keep an appointment. It was practically impossible for him to get up in the morning, and he was forever appearing at dinner, thinking it was breakfast. Yet he battled desperately against his defect, writing great signs in big capitals and pinning them on and around his bed: "Thou wilt not lie abed when the last trump blows"; "Thy sleep with the worms will be long enough." Yet none of this had any effect. He continued to be late with everything and continued to be apologetic. Like so many of the poets Thompson was a chronic hypochondriac, and unlike most was preoccupied with the future life and much afraid of eternal damnation.

### FURTHER REFERENCES FOR THIS SECTION

Page 467, Gray. For his fear of fire, see *Domestic Habits, Crotchets and Accidents*, p. 183.

Pages 471-2, Shelley. For his prescience of death by water, see *Hobbies and Avocations*, p. 206.

Pope (not mentioned in this section). Abnormal sinuosity, see *Heavenly Conceit and Worldly Vanity*, pp. 484-8.

Landor (not mentioned in this section). For his abnormal pugnacity, see *In Action*, pp. 396-7.

## INSANITY

Out of the almost 300 poets at whose lives I have glanced, only seven have been technically mad. Four more—including Rossetti, whose delusions were mentioned in the previous section—were somewhere close to the line. Six—

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if Dorothy Wordsworth be admitted as a poet—went harmlessly imbecilic at the end of their lives. Altogether 17 out of 300, almost one out of 18, were at one time or other deranged, and this not including Byron, Shelley, Swinburne, Francis Thompson, and many others who had their suspicious moments. On the other hand it may be pointed out that none of the technically mad poets is found on our list of the twenty greatest, and only Emerson among the senile imbeciles. In other words, though the disease of poetry itself may carry with it a tendency to insanity, this tendency will be overcome in cases where it attacks an otherwise robust and active intelligence. This accords with the theory, advanced in the section on “Health,” to the effect that the ideal physical condition of the poet is that of a generally robust body attainted with some faint, chronic infection.

Denham’s “second marriage brought upon him so much disquiet, as for a time disordered his understanding.”

Lee spent four years in Bedlam in “wild insanity.”

The eighteenth century, being the Age of Reason, was the open season for insanity. Swift, the soundest of them all, led off. Once when he was walking with Young near Dublin he hung back. Young returned to him and found him gazing up at a tall elm which was decayed in the upper branches. As Young came up, Swift said, “I shall be like that tree; I shall die at the top.” In 1736, when he was sixty-nine, he could no longer compose because of a giddiness that had been present and gradually increasing throughout his life. He was unable to read because of a resolution never to wear glasses. He had emptied his house of his friends by his parsimony. He sank into a state of continuous, futile vexation, which presently became imbecility. His food was brought cut into mouthfuls. He would never eat until the servant had left the room, when he would eat walking. By 1743 he had settled into absolute silence and lethargy, and died two years later.

It is recorded that Hammond was for a time “unextinguishably amorous” of a lady named Dashwood who was “inexorably cruel,” and that this impasse for a time “disordered his understanding.”

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After suffering four years of poverty and drunkenness, Collins inherited £2000 from an uncle, and almost immediately thereafter went mad. It became his practice to wander day and night among the aisles and cloisters of Chichester Cathedral, sobbing and moaning and accompanying the services or any music at all with loud shrieks. The normalcy of his zeal being at length misdoubted, he was locked up for a little season, and thereafter released to the care of his sister. Thenceforward his condition seems to have been one of harmless weak-mindedness, and he was allowed to travel abroad, properly accompanied.

Smart was a notorious and noisy drunkard at Cambridge, and Gray truly prophesied for him a jail or Bedlam. By 1763, when he was forty-one, he had gone loudly religious and was confined in a madhouse. Johnson, who had helped him before with contributions to a magazine he started, records his condition: "He has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement, he used for exercise to walk to the alehouse; but he was *carried* back again. I do not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him—also falling on his knees and saying his prayers in the street, or in any other unusual place; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as any one else. Another charge was, that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it." During his confinement Smart composed all of his long and remarkable poem, *Song of David*. No less remarkable than the poem was the method of its transcription and preservation. Being denied writing materials, he scratched much of it on the wainscoting of his room with a key, and the rest he retained in his addled head. Being released after some years, he at once drank himself into debtor's prison, and there died.

It is supposed to have been dissipation that drove Fergusson into a madhouse where, although his recovery was expected, he died in his cell, age twenty-three.

Cowper is the one poet who was at once really mad and possessed of formidable intellectual powers. When he was thirty-two he was a successful young lawyer and was about

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to come up for examination for a clerkship in the House of Lords. As the day approached he was oppressed by a sense of destined failure in the examinations, then by despondency over his general unfitness, till rapidly delusions of persecution piled on him and he saw himself libelled in everything he read. He set out to kill himself successively with laudanum, by drowning, and with a knife; and in each case he lost his nerve. He finally succeeded in hanging himself with his garters from the ceiling of his room, and did this time have the constancy to achieve unconsciousness before the garters happily broke and he was discovered in a semi-strangled heap on the floor. He revived in a truly dithering state and was put in the care of Doctor Cotton, a pious poet who ran an insane asylum. Thus, although Cowper had not been religious before, his recovery was into a religious ecstasy from which he never thereafter wholly descended. He set up with Mary Unwin, widow of a revivalist minister, and went mad a second time two years later when all of a sudden he fancied himself rejected by Heaven and again attempted suicide. Mary attended him alone for sixteen months, after which, being somewhat recovered, he insisted on being moved to the neighboring rectory where he was a great trial to the Reverend Mr. Newton. He suffered the third and last complete attack when he was forty-two. He went under while assisting the Reverend Newton compose a volume of hymns, and this time stayed mad for two years. On his recovery he took to gardening, the raising of hares, and the composition of secular poetry.

The year before the dangerous insanity of his sister, Lamb himself, being twenty, spent six weeks in an asylum at Hoxton.

After his remarkable treatment of her before and immediately following the birth of their child, Lady Byron had her husband examined by alienists who pronounced him sane.

In his middle forties Clare's reason succumbed. At the theatre he tried to climb out of a box and murder Shylock. At forty-seven he was shut up in an asylum whence after four years he escaped, was shortly recaptured and confined

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in another lunatic asylum, where he remained twenty years until his death. The bulk of his poetry written during his confinement has only recently been published for the first time.

Besides Swift, the following were more or less imbecile at the end of their lives: Rogers, Dorothy Wordsworth, Southey, Moore and Emerson. Emerson's trouble was that he couldn't remember words. He kept his humor though. Once when he wanted an umbrella he said, "I can't tell its name, but I can tell its history. Strangers take it away."

While an instructor in Greek at Harvard, Very succumbed to so severe a religious enthusiasm that the rest of the faculty thought him mad. In protest he voluntarily entered the insane asylum at Somerville, where he composed much verse and criticism.

### FURTHER REFERENCE FOR THIS SECTION

Rossetti (not mentioned in this section). For his delusions, see *Miscellaneous Aberrations*, p. 474.

## HEAVENLY CONCEIT AND WORLDLY VANITY

In the *Introduction* I took for my text Wordsworth's definition of the poet, principally in two terms: *First*, "*a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him*"; and *Second*, "*delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the Universe. . . .*" The first quality becomes, psychologically speaking, the poet's necessary faith or belief in himself, his supreme conceit; the second quality becomes his need of communication. This latter need is not, in its inception, a symptom of vanity. It is not a demand to be supported by the plaudits of the world. It is rather a sense that the great truth that I the poet have set on paper is common to me and the rest of mankind and ought to unite us socially as it

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does metaphysically. It is difficult for me the poet to conceive that society is not waiting with special eagerness for my message. Yet if this salutary communication does not occur, while I am pained, as by a separation from one I love, my integrity, my own conceit, is not jeopardized. God weeps, but he is none the less certain of his divine prerogative. The basic conceit of the poet is a remarkably pure and child-like thing. It makes no sound and asks no worship at all. It asks to communicate, to be understood, but not to be praised. It is found in a character as morally weak as Coleridge, as powerful as Milton, it underlies the bluster of Ben Jonson and the watchful self-effacement of Emily Dickinson. It is an attribute by itself, an element. It is the human spirit or imagination unperverted, untrammelled, undefeated, uncomplicated by any of the other powerful qualities found in man. I doubt if this essence, this soul, ever dies in any one, though in most people its features become twisted and tortured by reason from those of an angel into those of a fiend. Among the poets this distortion is less than among the run of rational humanity.

For reason is that human quality whose existence and function are most dangerous to the poet's conceit—all the more dangerous for the fact that a great poet must be equipped with a powerful rationale, which is to say an inquisitive and analytical mind. The poet of great endowment is certain to introspect and question himself deeply. His analysis may at the outset fail to corroborate the pretentious intuition of his spirit. He may conclude that he and all poets are fools, and so become a neurotic merchant or philanthropist. Or he may decide to give over his rationale and remain a poet, whether or no, a poet like Chaucer or Shakespeare with a sense of humor. Or again, he may, in the manner of most of the great poets—Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning, Whitman—build himself a cosmos of which he is still the center and either the God as before, or the vicar and intimate companion of the God. Here he is still the true and conceited poet. His integrity has passed the ordeal of reason.

But in most cases that conceited integrity does not come

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through the ordeal unscathed, and among the greatest as well as the least of the poets there is usually some area somewhere in the subconscious where self-doubt has taken up its abode. And out of the mouth of this beast there arises a smoke of sound and pretense to mask his fear. The world is asked to give assurance of importance where there is none. The poet gives over in some part to those antics of vanity which he is the first to deplore in the world around him. And as his conceit at the outset was great, so the flaw in it now is a dangerous wound and requires specially loud incantations and parades before the world. When poets go vain they go vainer than any other men—except musicians!

As already intimated, it is not always easy to distinguish between the poet's basic and honestly conceited need for communication and his secondary and dishonest efforts at display. Subjectively, within the poet's own mind, there is between them the difference between a deep and a superficial instinct, and few poets can deceive themselves for long as to whether they are following the true or the false way. Yet objectively, the two ways may look the same and may seem to lead to the same goal, the delivery of the poet's message to the world. In Whitman's elaborate and mendacious intrigues to publicize himself, was it vanity at work? Or the need of a newly converted poet to reach the world? Was his self-dramatization merely to draw attention to his person? Or was it for the purpose of filling a rôle which was sincere and peculiarly his own? In Whitman's case I am inclined to accredit the more honest motive. Perhaps we might say that when a poet tries frankly to set before the world his work and himself *for what he is*, then it is the essential conceit at work. But when he tries to draw attention to himself by assuming some rôle *that is not his own*, when, in other words, he wants merely to be seen and heard whether by communicating truth or falsehood, then we may say that vanity has him. By this distinction, Whitman's gyrations were mostly conceited, those of such as Pope, mostly vain. Pope's concern was to set before the world, not himself as he was, but an artificial character which he fabricated for purposes of display.

*The New Inn*, or *The Light Heart*, of Ben Jonson was indifferently received by audience and critics when it was produced. Two years later Jonson published it, with the following announcement on the title page: “*The New Inn* or *The Light Heart*; a Comedy never acted, but most negligently played by some, the King’s servants; and more squeamishly beheld and censured by others, the King’s subjects, 1629. Now at last set at liberty to the readers, his Majesty’s servants and subjects, to be judged, 1631.” Drummond, after he had entertained Jonson, made notes upon him, including this: “. . . A great lover of himself; . . . scorner of others; given rather to lose a friend than a jest; jealous of every word and action . . . (especially after drink, which is one of the elements in which he liveth); . . . thinketh nothing well but what either he himself or some of his friends . . . hath said or done . . .”

There is hardly a purer example of the essential and naïve poetic conceit than Milton’s early and unostentatious conviction that he was “dedicated to a high purpose,” “an inward prompting which grows daily upon me, that by labor and intense study, which I take to be my portion in this life, joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times, as they should not willingly let it die.” When Milton went into public life, for moral not poetic reasons, his conceit, in conformance with this apostasy, began to verge into vanity. In the controversy with Morus the latter did not scruple to charge Milton with physical ugliness and to emphasize especially the condition of his eyes, then going blind. “Lack lustre,” this generous adversary called them, “and guttering with prevalent rheum.” And Milton did not hesitate to answer bad taste in kind. He issued a public declaration of his good looks, stating particularly that his eyes were “externally uninjured. They shine with an unclouded light, just like the eyes of one whose vision is perfect.” In 1654 Milton sent Marvell, his young assistant, with a presentation copy of the *Secunda Defensio* and a letter to John Bradshaw, President of the Council, who lived in Eton. Not satisfied with Marvell’s brief report to the effect that

he had carried out his commission, Milton required of him a detailed report of exactly how he presented both the book and the letter, and exactly how the Lord President behaved in receiving each of the items. All this vanity of Milton's disappeared in the epic period when he resumed the pursuit of the still small voice of his youth.

Dryden recorded that after he and Sprat had witnessed the failure of Cowley's play, *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, they called on the author, and "that when they told Cowley how little favour had been shewn him, he received the news of his ill success, not with so much firmness as might have been expected from so great a man."

In Johnson's words, Dryden "placed his happiness in the claps of the multitudes." In 1673 he was in ecstasies of distress over the success of Settle's tragedy, *The Empress of Morocco*, and wrote scurrilous criticism of it which aimed to exalt his own reputation by comparison. He was said to have induced Creech to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation he had gained by his translation of Lucretius.

Prior provided by will for his own monument.

It may be that the gravamen of masculine vanity is the bluff of physical prowess whose exercise, conveniently or inconveniently, is prevented by social convention. Stature alone may be enough to satisfy the normal male need of parade, and if statistics were available it would probably be found that little men are more given to pomp and display than their gigantic brothers. Physically Pope was the puniest of the poets, and psychically he was the busiest in vain display. There were few gestures of his life that were directed otherwise than to elevate himself or to debase a rival, and he was continuously involved in one or more intrigues whose aim was to create the fictitious public figure not only of Pope the great poet, but of Pope the strong and courageous, the righteous and moral man. Somebody—I think Swift—said that Pope could not drink tea without a stratagem. One root of his sinuosity is usually found in his inherited Catholicism which, being subject to persecution in his youth, habituated him to subterfuge. But

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the main source of his slyness, I suspect, was the angry vanity of a vigorous male soul shut up in a "little tender crazy carcass." Because Pope was unable to avenge an insult physically he was abnormally quick in detecting one and taking his revenge in print. Because he was unable to take more than a glass of wine without gastronomic agony, he boasted of his prowess with the bottle. Because women could not look beyond his figure to his genius he hated them and boasted of his wholly fictitious licentiousness. Generally, because he was a sly dwarf among more or less normal men, he spent his life erecting a gracious and magnanimous Pope before the public gaze. There is perhaps no item in Pope's fourteen quarto volumes whose history, from conception through composition and publication to critical reception, is free from stealth. His precocity was in fact remarkable, but he habitually antedated his manuscripts to exaggerate it beyond the fact. When he was twenty-one, his *Pastorals* and those of Ambrose Phillips having appeared at about the same time, he wrote an anonymous letter to Steele's *Guardian*, professing to continue the universal praise of Phillips' work, but in effect damning it by citing the worst lines as the best and comparing them slyly to his own. Phillips, an excellent swordsman, was in a rage and hung up a whip in Button's coffee shop, announcing that he would beat Pope. Pope had himself made a little sword, appropriate to his stature, and hated Phillips forever. The full history of the *Dunciad* would make a detective story. One of its motives, and the most tragic thread in its history, derives from Pope's and Theobald's rival editions of Shakespeare. Theobald was a poor man and a poor writer who, inadequately patronized, eked out a miserable living by hack work. But he was a conscientious scholar and a great editor who left as his life work the basis of the modern text of Shakespeare. He had already begun this work when Pope, early in the 1720's, decided to beat him to it. Pope's work, quite superficial and now neglected, naturally proceeded faster than that of his painstaking rival. As the tortoise and the hare proceeded toward publication, Pope threw out constantly nervous little jibes at his rival who, attempting to reply in kind, proved

himself indeed a dunce in Pope's special satirical field. Meanwhile he, the tortoise, was under-nourished, and had to waste time grubbing for bread. Pope raced to the issuance of his useless edition in 1725, and with the slow spectre of Theobald still rising behind him, got out the *Dunciad* in 1728 with Theobald as the King of the dunces. Gradually the tremendous salvo of edition following edition demolished Theobald's little literary standing and the market for his bits of hack criticism and pseudo-satire. His scholarly pace sank to a crawl. In partial starvation he hung on till 1733, published his great work, and shortly died of combined want and tuberculosis. His honest and ineffectual retorts to Pope's elegant thunder are contained in the pathetic notes to his edition, where he shows with a sort of whimpering vindictiveness why he chose this rendering in place of that of Mr. Pope—and in every case Theobald was right and Pope the dunce in scholarship. I have given the barest outline of the story, which continued after the death of Pope and Theobald, when Warburton disgracefully attempted further to discredit the latter. But there stands Theobald's edition, and it is Shakespeare. There stands Pope's, and it is Pope at his worst. Incidentally Pope, having starved his rival off the immediate scene, graciously forgot him in the 1742 edition of the *Dunciad*, substituting in his place Cibber, who as laureate was at the moment more of a thorn in his side. But to return to the initial web in which the little spider caught his array of flies. He first employed Savage as informer to associate with the proposed dunces and gather for him his material of incident. In the publication he neglected no ruse to escape legal liability. His friend Walpole presented the book to the King and Queen. He assigned the property in the work to Lords Bathurst, Burlington and Oxford, in order to hide behind their skirts, and it was they who assigned it to the publisher. He saved much of his choicest filth for a second edition. He contrived to have simultaneous London and Dublin editions, each professing to be a copy of the other, and made an application in Chancery for an injunction against the allegedly piratical London edition—but insured the failure

of his application by neglecting to supply proof of his ownership of the manuscript. He employed Savage to publish a spurious account of the acclaim that heralded the publication. To later editions he prefixed a letter laudatory of Mr. Pope's morality and 'genius, written by himself and signed by Major Cleland. As the editions multiplied more such letters were added, some of them genuine. Meanwhile Pope slyly shuffled, side-stepped, grovelled, apologized, explained and expostulated, escaping now a cudgelling, now a law-suit. But the insignificance of the tempest of response in comparison to the *Dunciad* itself shows that in the end Pope was right in the choice of his victims—always with the exception of Theobald. As the storm of the dunces was dying down, Pope was already engaged in the project of the publication of his letters, an intrigue which, of all his machinations, is the least adulterated by any suspicion of honesty. At the outset, one Cull, a notorious literary pirate, published his correspondence with Henry Cromwell without any authority from him that has yet been discovered. Pope, of course, cried loud against the theft, which increased the sale of the letters, and immediately set out on one of his most subterranean intrigues, to get more of his early letters published under the convenient show of piracy. To begin with he carefully garbled the letters themselves, which had been written to Wycherley and others, deleting the supine flattery they had in fact contained and dressing the entire correspondence to make it appear that men thirty to fifty years his senior had been adulating him, a boy of seventeen. Whether, for this purpose of mendacious editing, he stole the letters from Lord Oxford's library, or whether he subsequently deposited them there, or whether they were never there, I do not know. At any event his scheme was to have Cull steal them, or at least receive them as stolen, from the library of the Earl. Whether or not Cull was taken in, he finally did get the letters as a result of correspondence with a fictitious and wicked fellow who signed himself "P. T." and who was, in fact, Pope himself. The letters appeared and Pope called on the high gods to avenge the injustice to which he was subjected. Meanwhile the death of Caryll, the last survivor of the corre-

spondents, gave him an opportunity further to falsify his letters and to scheme for a second edition. This publication got Pope national acclaim for his virtue and encouraged him to a fresh and more daring intrigue for the publication of his correspondence with his extant and intimate friends, Swift and Bolingbroke. Swift, in his days of power, had gratuitously taken up Pope, then little known, had introduced him generally to the ministry and the aristocracy, had been largely responsible for the enormous subscription to his *Homer*, and had remained without reservation his friend. At the time of the epistolary intrigue the Dean was lapsing into his imbecility, and Pope's duping of him, though it did the old man no real harm, is the darkest blot on the younger man's record. By a patient and hypocritical correspondence he pestered the Dean until he got from him what he wanted, a letter advocating and assuming the responsibility for the publication of all their former letters. The correspondence was then issued immediately, without recourse to the expedient of piracy, accompanied by a bashful and decent comment by Pope, expressing dastardly regret that so great a man as Swift had been should be so fallen as to stoop to this kind of petty vanity. Unctious duplicity could go no further.

In 1714, when Gay was twenty-six, he became Secretary to the Earl of Clarendon, Ambassador to Hanover, and from that time his mental health waxed and waned with his standing with the new royal house, especially with the Prince and Princess of Wales. He was invited by the latter to read before her his play *The Captives*. "When the hour came, he saw the Princess and her ladies all in expectation, and advancing with reverence too great for any other attention, stumbled at a stool, and falling forwards, threw down a weighty Japan screen. The Princess started, the ladies screamed, and poor Gay . . . was still to read his play."

Edmund Smith was conceited and contemptuous of others, and always complained because Addison was treated better than he was.

Young was, on the whole, a popular preacher. One day

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he was preaching at St. James, and presently perceiving that he was unable to command the attention of his audience, he was so affected that he sat back in the pulpit and burst into tears.

A Mr. Ing, a "gentleman of great eminence in Staffordshire," once took the liberty of asking Ambrose Phillips, in relation to a work of his, how the King of Epirus came to drive oxen and to say, "I am goaded on by love." After which Phillips never spoke to Mr. Ing again.

Concerning Savage's vanity, Johnson wrote one of his classic passages: "It was always Mr. Savage's desire to be distinguished; and, when any controversy became popular, he never wanted some reason for engaging in it with great ardour, and appearing at the head of the party which he had chosen. As he was never celebrated for his prudence, he had no sooner taken his side, and informed himself of the chief topicks of the dispute, than he took all opportunities of asserting and propagating his principles, without much regard to his own interest, or any other visible design than that of drawing upon himself the attention of mankind." Doctor Johnson then goes on to recount how Savage got in a little over his head in the famous dispute between the Bishop of London and the Chancellor, being "an indefatigable opposer of all the claims of ecclesiastical power, though he did not know on what they were founded." It was on this occasion that he wrote the scurrilous satirical poem *The Progress of a Divine* which got him into one of his several legal actions. "Vanity," concludes Johnson, "may surely be pardoned in him, to whom life afforded no other comforts than barren praises and the consciousness of deserving them."

On the first night of his *Agamemnon*, which failed, Thomson was so disturbed that, coming late to friends with whom he was to sup, he excused himself by explaining that "the sweat of his distress had so disordered his wig, that he could not come till he had been refitted by a barber."

Smart, at Cambridge, produced a play of his own, had hysterics of laughter at his Prologue, and himself acted five parts in the production.

Shenstone lived "in a place which his taste had adorned; but which he only enjoyed when people of note came to see and commend it."

Macpherson in his will provided that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey, which was done. Also, he left £300 for a monument to be raised to his memory "in some conspicuous situation at Belleville."

When Chatterton was in London at seventeen he boasted in his letters that his company was courted everywhere, and that "he would settle the nation before he was done."

The Lord and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, all began to appear to Blake in childhood and, by the time he was grown up, had convinced him that he was of the order of the prophets. When he was in the throes of the difficult decision to give up the hospitality of Hayley, which meant physical comfort as reward for spiritual suicide, he received divine reassurance of his importance: "I too well remember the threats I heard!—'If you, who are organized by divine providence for spiritual communion, refuse, and bury your talent in the earth, even though you should want natural bread, sorrow and desperation pursue you through life, and after death shame and confusion of face to eternity. Every one in eternity will leave you, aghast at the man who was crowned with glory and honour by his brethren, and betrayed their cause to their enemies. . . .'" And about the same time he wrote to his friend Butts: "I have conquered and shall go on conquering. Nothing can withstand the fury of my course among the stars of God and in the abysses of the Accuser." There was magnificence in this. In a worldly way Blake had up to that time, aged forty-five, conquered nothing, and he was about to surrender his only means of livelihood. Blake was stimulated by appreciation, and suffered from the fact that the world neglected him and his perceptions went almost uncommunicated. But he never lost belief in himself for that, nor altered his course at all. One day he showed a drawing to the engraver Fuseli, who said to him, "That looks as if someone might have told you it was good." "Yes, someone did," said Blake. "Who?" asked Fuseli. "The Virgin

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Mary—now what have you to say to that?" "Only," said Fuseli, "that the Virgin Mary does not always have immaculate taste."

Just before the publication of Burns's first book, he was enmeshed in his most flagrant amorous entanglements, and lived in disgrace. Yet speaking later of himself as he remembered his attitude at that time, he said: "I can truly say that *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favor. . . ."

Tennyson recorded that once as a young man he was walking arm in arm with the old man Rogers and remarked how few writers are sure of immortality. "Rogers squeezed my arm and said: 'I am sure of it.'"

At eighteen Wordsworth already hoped that he might leave behind him some monument "which pure hearts should reverence," and the apparent derivation of the phrase from Milton is suggestive, for within ten years Wordsworth was candidly considering himself the Milton of his age. Whenever he and Dorothy went visiting—which they did frequently—they always took along William's books which one or both of them read to the company. Crabb Robinson says that "Wordsworth, in my first *tête-a-tête* with him"—in 1808, when Wordsworth was thirty-eight—"spoke frequently and praisingly of his own poems." In 1818 Keats wrote to his brothers, "I am sorry that Wordsworth has left a bad impression wherever he visited in town by his egotism, Vanity, and bigotry." Crabb Robinson entered in his diary that at Hunt's dinner "I heard a long time Coleridge quoting Wordsworth's verses; and Wordsworth quoting, not Coleridge's, but his own." Once Wordsworth attended a party in London where the host astounded the company by bringing out and opening a case containing Milton's watch. All the guests crowded around to have a look except Wordsworth, who stood apart alone and taking out his own watch held it long in his hand, gazing at it in silent reverence. Blake seems to have ranked Wordsworth with Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. Yet a passage in the Introduction to the *Excursion* brought on him a fit of illness, according

to Crabb Robinson. In the passage in question the author recited how

Jehovah—with his thunder and the choir  
Of shouting angels, and the empyreal throne—  
I pass them unalarmed.

Blake asked Robinson, "Does Mr. Wordsworth think his mind can surpass Jehovah?" In all these episodes and expressions of Wordsworth's, if we first admit the absolute perfection of his conceit and the horrid candor of himself, it is not necessary to ascribe to him vanity at all. Believing utterly that he and his work were the only things of importance to talk about, it was natural that he should introduce and encourage these matchless topics of conversation. So far, we can let him off as the naïve poet. But there are, unfortunately, other bits of evidence against him. Whatever was his parade of self-assurance, he was mighty anxious to get Lamb's opinion of the *Lyrical Ballads*, though on meeting Lamb he disguised this eagerness with "what appeared to be an effort at lofty indifference." In his old age, when guests came to visit at Rydal Mount, he might be seen, after greeting them and directing them into the house, lingering behind himself in order to have a peek into the carriage to see if they had any of his books. This—to do the earlier Wordsworth justice—was long after his poetry was done.

It is consoling to find that the helpless, lovable Coleridge never seems to have doubted his own genius, nor to have had recourse to any vanity. "Oh wayward and desultory spirit of genius!" he wrote when he was twenty-four, "I'll canst thou brook a task-master." And as late as 1801, when there was already doubt of his ability to perform, he wrote Southey, proposing that, with Wordsworth, they emigrate to America or to some island, and added that "By the living God, it is my opinion that we should not leave three such men behind us." Yet of the desire to parade before men he seems to have been peculiarly free, and of those jealousies and envies which are the meaner side of vanity he showed no sign. On the contrary he was almost abject in his selfless-

ness, especially where Wordsworth was concerned. When he was about thirty, he made a statement which is probably unique among the poets. Of his cold granite friend against whom he was surely beating himself away Coleridge said, "He must increase but I must decrease."

Landor, having on one occasion written a request of some sort to a Welsh bishop, a neighbor, and the latter having been slow in replying, Landor wrote again, "God alone is great enough for me to ask anything of twice." Of the *Imaginary Conversations* he said frankly, "What I write is not written on slate." And he was equally complacent of his verse.

The psychic necessity of Byron's histrionics was discussed in the section "The Struggle for Integrity." They were partially redeemed by the fact that they were little, if at all, self-deceptive. He knew perfectly he was putting on a silly play for his own indulgence. His vanity was frankly of his person, and he made an equal display of his beauty, his supposed athletic prowess and his supposed profligacy in women and drink. Once Scrope Davis, spending the night with Byron, found to his surprise that the famous curls, so devastating in drawing-rooms, were the product of curl papers. "I'm a damned fool," said Davis, "but I was sure your hair curled naturally." "Yes," said Byron, "naturally every night; but don't let the cat out of the bag, as I'm as vain of my curls as a girl of sixteen." Byron boasted vastly of his wholly fictitious capacity as a drinker, likewise of his abilities in swimming, boxing and fencing, which he also greatly exaggerated. One of his favorite poses was that of weary old age and he was half serious when, coming to see the Shelleys in 1815 at the Hotel de Londre in Geneva, he set down his name on the register as "100." Byron had some vanity of his work, but it was far less than his vanity of his person. He never presented a copy of any book of his to Doctor Drury, his beloved head master at Harrow, "because you are the only man I never wish to read them." This was the pose of profligacy, but immediately he dropped it and asked his old mentor eagerly, "What do you think of the *Corsair*?"

Shelley's early conviction that he personally was going to lead the world into Utopia is perhaps the most famous of all evidences of poetic naïveté. Gradually the world beat this out of him. At the end he was despondent because of his failure to communicate, but there was no sign of vanity or loss of basic conceit. His *Alastor*, published in 1815, sold scarcely a copy in a year and a half, while the third Canto of *Childe Harold*, published in the same year, sold 7000 copies on the day of publication. This broke Shelley, and he wrote to Hunt suggesting that the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* be published anonymously, saying, "I think it deserves a better fate than to be linked with so stigmatized and unpopular a name (so far as it is known) as mine." After Keats's death Shelley wanted to write a critical article on him, also to edit an edition of his works, with a life; but he refrained from doing it, being convinced that, due to his own unpopularity, it would not "find a single reader." The same year, 1821, Shelley being almost twenty-nine, *Queen Mab* was pirated. He uttered loud protestations of rage and actually made some gestures toward getting an injunction, but he was secretly pleased. The following year, that of his death, he was torpid and drained from the neglect of the world. He said that he believed the verdict of posterity on him would be, "Guilty—Death."

While still in medical school, Keats displayed plenty of the poet's conceit, as revealed by the following excerpts from the memoir of Doctor Stephens, who was his roommate there. "He . . . looked upon the medical career as the career by which to live in a workaday world, without being certain that he could keep up the strain of it. He nevertheless had a consciousness of his own powers, and even of his own greatness, though it might never be recognized. . . . Poetry was to his mind the zenith of all aspirations: the only thing worthy the attention of superior minds. . . . The greatest men in the world were the poets and to rank among them was the chief object of his ambition. It may readily be imagined that this feeling was accompanied with a good deal of pride and conceit, and that amongst mere medical students he would walk and talk as one of the

Gods might be supposed to do when mingling with mortals. This pride exposed him, as may be readily imagined, to occasional ridicule, and some mortification. . . . Sometimes I ventured to show him some lines which I had written, but I always had the mortification of hearing them condemned, indeed he seemed to think it presumption in me to attempt to tread along the same pathway as himself at however humble a distance. . . ." That is a pretty clear picture of orthodox poetic arrogance, especially significant in being found in one so young, without a shred of external evidence to buttress it. In 1819, Keats's twenty-fourth year, he confided to Haydon that he felt "all the vices of a Poet, irritability, love of effect and admiration." Yet I think it can be said of Keats, as of Shelley, that he was singularly free from superficial vanity which aims merely to display itself. Like Shelley he had that deeper need to communicate, to communicate past death, to establish forever a current between himself and something in the external world, in other words to write something immortal. Until near the end of his life he believed that "After my death I shall be among the English poets." But in the last year he wrote to Fanny Brawne: "If I should die, I have left no immortal work behind me—nothing to make my friends proud of my memory—but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remembered." That is the tragic cry of every poet and every man, eager to do his act in his fashion and project himself against the canvas of history.

Of Neal's first two books, both published in his twenties, he declared in his candid later years that they contained "more sincere poetry, more exalted, original pure poetry, than all the works of all the other authors that have ever appeared in America."

An unfortunate poetaster named Mulchinock used to go about reading his verses to Emerson and others, begging these great men to quote them and to sign a certificate for him that they *were* indeed verses.

It is difficult to tell when Poe is talking genuine conceit, when histrionic vanity, and when he is simply spoofing the

stupid world. In 1827, when he was eighteen, he published *Tamerlane, and Other Poems*, saying in the introduction: "The greater part of the poems which compose this little volume were written in the year 1821-22, when the author had not completed his fourteenth year. . . . He is conscious that there were many faults . . . which he flatters himself he could have with little trouble corrected, but, unlike many of his predecessors, he has been too fond of his early productions to amend them in his old age." (Old age!) Immediately after the appearance of this volume he joined the army for two years, later covering this period of humiliation by a legend which was universally accredited during his lifetime. According to this tale, he went to Greece, fought in the then revolution against Turkey, fought a duel in France, had a portrait done in London, was arrested for drunkenness in St. Petersburg, and rescued from jail by the intervention of the American Consul. In 1829 he wrote to John Neal of a quotation from *Al Aaraaf*, "I am certain that these lines have never been surpassed." When he read *Al Aaraaf* and *The Raven* to a Boston audience that walked out on him, he afterward noted in *The Broadway Journal*: "It would scarcely be supposed that we would put ourselves to the trouble of composing for the Bostonians anything in the shape of an *original* poem. We had a poem . . . one quite as good as new . . . that we considered would answer sufficiently well for an audience of transcendentalists. . . . We wrote it, printed it, and published it in book form, before we had fairly completed our tenth year"—he wrote *Al Aaraaf* between eighteen and twenty and *The Raven* considerably later. In *Eureka*, although Poe innocently begged that the work be considered only as a poem, he actually set up as a scientist and "was himself profoundly convinced that he had revealed the secret of eternity." In selling the book to Mr. Putnam he "was in a tremor of excitement and declared with intense earnestness and solemnity that the issue of the book was of momentous interest and that the truths disclosed in it were of more consequence than the discovery of gravitation, and that an edition of fifty thousand copies would be but a beginning." When he

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was doing a biographical sketch of Lowell to appear in a section of *Graham's Magazine* called "Our Contributors," he hinted to Lowell in his letters that he do as much for him. As a part of the hint he sent him an etching of himself, with the comment, ". . . it is better as an engraving than as a portrait—it scarcely resembles me at all."

Tennyson was very early preoccupied with himself. As a tiny boy he would sit on the damp moss of Holywell Glen, saying, "Alfred—Alfred—Alfred," until he was in a highly sensitized state of self-hypnosis. In his later life he bore witness that "the first poetry that moved me was my own at five years old." Here was the true self-belief of the poet, and in Tennyson's case it had a harder internal road to run than in the case of any other first-rate talent. There was in Tennyson something like an excess of physical cowardice that made him afraid even of intellectual antagonism and always much in need of support. Hence the extreme vanity, the extreme dependence upon criticism, and the perpetual rationalization of his conceit. The rationalizing self-justification began early. Among the crowd of talented brothers and sisters at Somersby Abbey, Alfred from the first threw a cloud of mystery around himself and confided to the other astounded youngsters that he was going to be a "great man." And this conscious determination, this vague, self-inflationary image, even this very phrase, he thereafter repeated and held up before himself *ad nauseam*. On leaving Somersby for Cambridge, he said to his younger brother, "Arthur, I *mean* to be famous." And thenceforth—I here paraphrase the excellent thesis of Nicholson—this self-supporting determination gradually muffled the honest poet under its rhetorical mental gesture. To be merely a lyric poet, a penner of perfect verses, that was not enough. He set out to convince himself, his friends and the age that he was also a great shaggy thinker, an authority on all the troubrous doubts of the time, a Prophet of the Old Testament inspired with the "gift of poetry" from a "divine source," and commissioned to thunder the truth down to the British Empire. His sense of mission became "almost awful" to him in its intensity; and since he was the most

popularly successful poet of all time, his vanity was able on the whole to congratulate itself. Once Tennyson and Meredith took a long walk together, Tennyson most of the time gloomy and silent. Suddenly he growled, "Appolodorus [a Scotch critic] says I am not a great poet." Meredith assured him that Appolodorus was not an important authority. "But," objected Tennyson, "he ought not to say I am not a great poet." These were the only words exchanged on that walk. On another occasion Tennyson was on a walking trip with Lord Houghton in the Alps when, coming down a mountain-side, they saw a group of people assembled below, apparently awaiting them. "Those dreadful Americans," said Tennyson, "are waiting to see me." But when they reached the place none of the people paid the least attention to them, and Tennyson, when they had passed, said, "Perhaps they didn't recognize me." In Tennyson's conceit, the vanity that compelled him to build it up, the dependence on the world, is always perceptible; while in Wordsworth's fatuous assumptions the world and its opinions are either disregarded or assumed to coincide with his own. In Tennyson's later years, when he was sure of himself and no longer challenged, the fabric of vanity, no longer needed, tended to fall away. Sincerely and with no false humility, he questioned his own popularity. When, meeting the Duke of Argyll, the latter said to him, "I am glad to know you," Tennyson replied, "You won't find much in me—after all." He wrote an easy letter to Barnes in which he said: "Modern fame is nothing. I would rather have an acre of land. I shall go down, down. I am up now." These statements could not have been made if the true conceit of the poet had not survived the artificial conceit which he showed to the world. Tennyson indulged a harmless kind of vanity in the matter of his ancestry. Having scoffed at his grandfather's Plantagenet pretensions, he used to go in middle life to Westminster Abbey and stand before the tomb of Edward III, ruminating on the family resemblance—especially the deep furrow from lip to nostril. Also he put the d'Eyncourt arms on his fireplaces. But the serious aspect of Tennyson's vanity was in the sickening

need of praise for his work and his "great" mind. Throughout his life he was intimate only with men who flattered these. At Cambridge he would permit none of the "Apostles" to criticize his poems, and the society itself was a shameless den of mutual adulation. Much later, after his old friend Fitzgerald told him that his work had lost the old "champagne flavour," they did not meet again for forty years. He dropped Patmore from his list of friends because he questioned something. And Jowett drew forth a piece of frightened ugliness. He invited Tennyson to read after lunch at a party at his house. When the laureate finished there were ecstatic murmurs of appreciation, then silence. Then Jowett said, "I wouldn't publish that, Tennyson, if I were you." And Tennyson boomed back like a great bearded Miss Alfred, "If it comes to that, Master, the sherry you gave us at lunch today was positively filthy." Tennyson hated the press mostly because he feared it as the one place where he was sure to get more or less honest criticism, and so a fair share of detraction. The 1832 volume caught it badly everywhere, caught it with typical unfairness from the *Quarterly* in the person of Lockhart that great inquisitor of genius. Tennyson trembled. He withdrew *The Lover's Tale*, which was already on the presses and about to be issued. He considered leaving England and settling abroad. And he published nothing for ten years. It was this last frightened forbearance that earned for him a permanent place in literature. He withdrew from the sound of the press and the world generally. He moped alone, and his own genius asserted itself. With no Lockharts or Norths before him in person he told their images to go to hell, and maintained his own unique standards. He wrote almost everything he ever wrote that was worth preserving, and he polished up the best things Lockhart had ridiculed. In 1842 he went back to the world with enough actually on paper to withstand the frights, the flights, and the long years of pious vanity that ensued. He told Moxon, the publisher of the 1842 volume, to conceal from him all but the most favorable reviews. But he need not have worried. He had won his place now, and adverse criticism henceforth seldom

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went farther than to suggest humbly that this or that detail might not be quite accurate. And all of this criticism Tennyson tried henceforth meticulously to honor, busily correcting and impairing his work in order that the image of the "great man" might remain inflated before men.

Jowett said of Browning: "I had no idea there was a perfectly sensible poet in the world, entirely free from vanity, jealousy, or any other littleness. . . ." Altogether Browning was too good to be true, and there is some relief in the story of his remarkable behavior when he and his wife, then a far better-known poet than he, attended a séance of Sludge the medium. It seems that the occult powers had arranged, by means of certain wires, for a laurel wreath to make a few turns around the dim room, then float over the head of Elizabeth Barrett, and so settle gently on her brows. The occult powers, however, had not communicated their intention to Browning, who, when he saw the mystic wreath appear, immediately supposed it destined for himself and proceeded to pursue it around the room, putting his head in receptive positions beneath it and, when it showed a tendency to verge toward Elizabeth, jealously intercepting its swoops with his person, until he had to be cautioned against interfering with the will of the gods, and so returned baffled, but still cheerful of course, to his place.

Like Pope and Poe, Whitman was industrious in creating the legend of himself. But with considerable differences both in the legend and in the manner of propagating it. Pope, being a remarkably unscrupulous man, made his self-portrait fictitiously immaculate. Poe made himself the hero of any improbable tale, however lurid, so long as it drew attention to himself. Whitman, on the other hand, consistently represented himself as the "good gray poet" which in all fatuous sincerity he believed himself to be and which in fact he was. He touched up the daguerreotype with the eye of the trained journalist, but the likeness was genuine. Pope and Poe were born calculating old men. Whitman at seventy was still a boastful boy. Whitman inaugurated his lifelong tactics of publicity by the misuse of Emerson's

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famous letter to him, it being the only really favorable reaction to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. To cheer himself against the almost unanimous adverse criticism in the press, Walt carried this letter about with him. He showed it to Dana, editor of *The Tribune*, and permitted him to publish it, to Emerson's great annoyance. Whitman further wrote several anonymous reviews eloquently laudatory of himself and his book, that in *The Democratic Review* being the most impressive of these. He also hastened to print a second edition in which he included Emerson's letter, without permission, all the favorable reviews he had written for himself, the false announcement that the first edition of 1000 had sold out, and a fulsome proclamation of his own happy prospects as a poet. When Secretary of the Interior Harlan fired Whitman out of the Department because of the pornography of *Leaves of Grass*, Walt's friend, O'Connor, wrote a fiery pamphlet defending him, with which Walt meddled at least to the extent of suggesting the appellation "good gray poet," which self-chosen appellation stuck to him thereafter. As success began to turn Walt's way he did not cease to court her. He himself wrote about half of the volume *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person*, published by his friend Burroughs. In 1871, having delivered a poem by invitation at the annual exhibition of the American Institute, he wrote to *The Washington Chronicle* an anonymous letter descriptive of the occasion and immensely flattering to himself, and subsequently included it in a separate edition of the poem. A part of the allusion to himself was as follows: "His great figure was clothed in gray, with white vest, no necktie, and his beard as unshorn as ever. His voice is magnificent, and is to be mentioned with Nature's oceans and the music of the forests and hills. His gestures are few, but significant." At the close of the reading "all the directors of the Institute crowded around him. He regained his old Panama hat and stick and . . . made a quiet exit by the steps at the back of the stand." This self-propagandizing was different in kind from Pope's in that there was no attempt to defame any one else. Whit-

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man stood before his tent beating his own drum, but he never set up his show to compete with that of another. He proclaimed himself superior to everybody in the world, not to anybody else in particular. Also, with regard to his self-publicizing, it must be remembered that he was a professional journalist, and such editorial shifts as inspired letters and dramatic exaggerations were his familiar stock in trade. When Whitman was seventy-two, a year before his death, he cut off some of his silk-fine and silk-soft hair, arranged it in a swirl on a card, and beside it wrote the inscription, "A lock of Walt Whitman's hair, 1891." At this time he had already, like the Duchess of Newcastle, Prior and Macpherson, provided for his own tomb—not only provided for it but had it constructed to his approval.

Christina Rossetti almost forewent writing poetry for good when Ruskin criticized adversely some of her early attempts.

While at Oxford, Swinburne was sent to read history with one Reverend Stubbs, a country clergyman and a witty and charming man. His host having inquired of Swinburne whether he wrote poetry, he produced the manuscript of a huge historical tragedy and read it all. Mr. Stubbs praised it in general, but ventured to question one or two spots. Swinburne responded with a "long, silent stare," then gave a "scream which rent the vicarage," and bolted upstairs. The next day Mr. Stubbs, greatly distressed, apologized. Swinburne said, "I lighted a fire in the empty grate, and I burned every page of the manuscript.—But it does not matter; I sat up all night and wrote it right through again from memory." At a later period in his life Swinburne once declared at a dinner party that after Shakespeare, Milton and Shelley, he had the best ear of any English poet.

Wilde's vaunted conceit was journalistic vanity. In 1896 Frank Harris wrote of Shakespeare in *The Saturday Review*: "We know him better than we know any of our contemporaries, and he is better worth knowing." Wilde promptly sent Harris a note saying, "Surely I am better worth knowing than Shakespeare." There is, I suppose, a

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whole anthology of passes between Whistler and Wilde. An English newspaper once printed the following: "James McNeil Whistler and Oscar Wilde were seen yesterday at Brighton, talking as usual about themselves." Whistler sent the clipping to Wilde, with a note saying: "I wish these reporters would be accurate; if you remember, Oscar, we were talking about me." Whereupon Wilde sent Whistler a telegram, saying, "It is true, Jimmie, we were talking about you, but I was thinking of myself."

Francis Thompson was probably the purest poet of all: the lifelong preoccupation with himself, his spiritual welfare and his poetry; the conceit that was so sure of itself that it faced starvation with equanimity and never needed to declare itself or buttress itself in any way; the entire absence of worldly adaptation or compromise, or vanity in any form. In his lowest degradation on the streets of London, he never doubted the importance of himself or his poetry. From the beginning he knew that he would have the ear of humanity, along with Milton and Dryden and Shelley. Writing to Meynell about Le Gallienne's enthusiastic review of his first book, he first expressed gratitude that another poet who was so young should have dealt with him so generously, and then continued: "I am . . . disposed to rank myself higher than Mr. Le Gallienne's final sentence might seem to imply." When a writer from *The World* asked to interview him as a subject for one of the "Celebrities at Home," he simply neglected the invitation. Whitten wrote of him when he was thirty-seven: "He had ceased to make demands on life. . . . As a reviewer . . . he never pounced on a book; he waited, and he accepted. Interested still in life, he was no longer intrigued by it. He was free from both apathy and desire. Unembittered, he kept his sweetness and sanity, his dewy laughter, and his fluttering gratitude."

With these sketches of the conceit and vanity of the poet we return upon the definition of him with which we began—"a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who

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rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him." With this illustration of the only thesis that has been attempted, the course of the book naturally comes to an end.

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Page 488, Gay. For his death because of insufficient recognition, see *Death*, p. 267.

Page 489, Savage. For his vanity in dress, see *Looks and Manners*, p. 72. For his touchiness in accepting patronage, see *The Struggle for Integrity*, pp. 343-5.

Page 493, Byron. For his vanity of alcoholic prowess, see *Little Indulgences*, pp. 192-3. For his vanity of athletic prowess, see *Exercise*, pp. 241-3.

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Besides the verbatim quotations, the acknowledgments of which follow, many of the anecdotes of this book are more or less closely paraphrased from the sources. To have acknowledged specifically these numerous indebtednesses would have been at once to risk virtual misquotation and to undertake a ponderous labor of annotation of no value to the reader and of negligible benefit to the original authors. The present author wishes, therefore, to confess generally that for the style and phraseology of many of the anecdotes he is beholden to his sources.

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